

**STILL DEFIANT AFTER 30 YEARS** | PETER LAZENBY  
**SCOTTISH IDENTITY – WHAT IS THAT?** | LESLEY RIDDOCH  
**THE MAN WHO SANK ARGENTINA** | GREG PALAST

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 88

**SPECIAL ISSUE**



# THE MURDER OF GAZA

**NINE ESSAYS BY DAVID EDWARDS AND DAVID CROMWELL ● PHILIP GIRALDI ● RAMZY BAROUD ● LINDA McQUAIG ● JONATHAN COOK JOHN REINER ● CHRIS HEDGES ● RICHARD PITHOUSE ● DEEPA KUMAR**



Cover: Israeli tank fires a shell into Gaza in a propaganda photograph from the Israel Defence Forces

# ColdType

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# The Vulture: Chewing Argentina's living corpse

In this excerpt from *Billionaires & Ballot Bandits*, **Greg Palast** tells how hedge fund investor Paul Singer forced a nation into default

A call came in from New York to my bosses at BBC Television Centre, London. It was from one of the knuckle-draggers on the payroll of billionaire Paul Singer, Number One funder for the Republican Party in New York, million-dollar donor to the Mitt Romney super-PAC, and top money-giver to the GOP Senate campaign fund. But better known to us as Singer The Vulture.

"We have a file on Greg Palast."

Well, of course they do.

And I have a file on them.

I had just returned from traveling up the Congo River for BBC and the *Guardian*. Singer's enforcer indicated that Mr. Singer would prefer BBC not run a story about him – especially not with film of his suffering prey: children, cholera victims.

Like any vulture, Singer feasts when victims die. Literally. For example, Singer made a pile buying asbestos company Owens Corning out of bankruptcy. The company had concealed from its workers they would get asbestosis from handling their product.

You don't want to die of asbestosis. Your lungs turn to mush and you drown inside yourself.

The asbestos company was forced to pay tens of thousands of its workers for their medical care and for their families after their deaths.

But then Singer used his political muscle

to screw down the compensation promised to the workers. He offered them peanuts. And, dying, they took it. Like the Ice Man, Singer The Vulture used the cudgel of "tort reform" to beat the weakened workers into submission. With asbestos workers buried or bought-off cheap, Singer's asbestos death factories were now worth a fortune... and Singer made his first "killing."

Then it was on to Peru, where Singer had, through a brilliant financial-legal maneuver too questionable for others to attempt, grabbed control of the entire financial system of the country. When Peru's scamp of a president, Alberto Fujimori, decided it was a good idea to flee his country (ahead of his arrest on murder charges), Singer, Peru's lawyer Mark Cymrot of Baker & Hostetler told me, let Fujimori escape in return for the Murderer-in-Chief ordering Peru's treasury to pay Singer \$58 million. Singer had seized Peru's "Air Force One" presidential jet; for the payoff, Singer handed him the keys to the getaway plane.

And by the way, I didn't give Singer the name "Vulture."

His own banker buddies did – with admiration in their voices.

What provoked the threatening call to BBC from Singer's tool was my film from the Congos (there are two nations in Africa called "Congo"). There is a cholera epidemic in West Africa due to lack of clean water. Our investi-

**Singer had seized Peru's "Air Force One" presidential jet; for the payoff, Singer handed the fleeing president Fujimori the keys to his getaway plane**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**Either the Greek government would pay Singer and Dart several times what the speculators invested, or Singer and Dart would undermine the entire bailout deal, bringing down the remnant of Greece's economy – and the rest of Europe with it**

gation learned that Singer paid about \$10 million for some “debt” supposedly incurred by the Republic of Congo. To collect on his \$10 million, Singer had begun seizing about \$400 million in the poor nation's assets.

Clean water for the Congo? Forget it – Singer and his vulture colleagues grabbed it all.

In Africa, I spoke with Winston Tubman, the former deputy secretary-general of the UN. He asked me to ask the Vulture and his cronies, “Do you know you are causing babies to die?”

It's legal, it's sick, it's Singer.

Well, not legal in most of the civilized world. Britain, Germany, Holland, and many others have outlawed Singer's repo-man seizures. In Europe, Singer is a financial outlaw. But in the USA, he's a “job creator.”

Singer The Vulture gets loads of positive press, in the *New York Times* especially, where the corpse-chewer offered an open checkbook to any state Republican who would vote for the right of gays to marry. Don't think of this as an unselfish act of moral courage: it was more *droit du seigneur*, the right of the Lords of the Manor to deflower the virgins of choice on their lands. The Vulture's son wanted to

marry another man, and so Vulture would buy the New York State Legislature to approve the nuptials. (That almost all Singer's money would go to national candidates who would make gay marriage illegal, well, money is thicker than blood.)

But, under press cover of funding the GOP for social rights, Singer's influence in the state legislature has paid back a hundredfold. He lobbied the legislature to change the law on the calculation of interest charges on his vulture loan-sharking operation, a change that will guarantee him hundreds of millions of dollars more from the Congo.

The Vulture's latest hit was a pay-off from the bankrupt government of Greece. On April 4, 2012, seventy-seven-year-old Greek pharmacist Dimitris Christoulas wrote, “I find no other solution for a dignified end before I

start sifting through garbage to feed myself.” Christoulas then shot himself in the head. The government had cut his pension as part of an austerity plan to pay foreign creditors. One in four workers also lost their jobs.

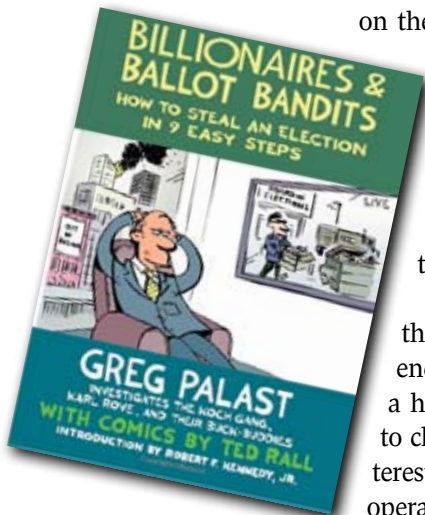
Greece's creditor banks took their pound of flesh, but gave up some of theirs, canceling 80 percent of the loan principal. That is, all but two “bankers”: billionaires Ken Dart and Singer The Vulture told the European Central Bank and Greek government, they wanted it all. Singer and Dart would not cancel 80 percent or even 8 percent of the bonds they held, even though Singer and Dart, apparently, only paid a fraction of the face value for them only a few weeks before. Either the Greek government would pay Singer and Dart several times what the speculators invested, or Singer and Dart would undermine the entire bailout deal, bringing down the remnant of Greece's economy – and the rest of Europe with it.

Held hostage, the Greek government dipped into its emptying purse and paid Singer and Dart every penny they demanded. Singer's co-investors in his fund Elliott Management made a killing – including the “blind” trust of one Mittens Romney.

But the Vulture's gravy train of greed was about to run into an unexpected obstacle on the track. On April 4, just hours after Christoulas took his own life, in a courtroom in Washington, DC, the President of the United States and his Secretary of State hit Singer with a legal brick. Without any public announcement, without the usual press release and in language so abstruse only a lunatic journalist who went to the University of Chicago Law School would notice, Obama's Justice Department nailed the Vulture to the wall.

It was Ash Wednesday and Obama's boys drove those nails in: they demanded a US federal court to stop Singer from attacking Argentina.

In this case, Singer had sued to get millions, even billions, from the government of Argentina for old debt that President Ronald Reagan had already settled in a deal involving the biggest US banks. But Reagan's deal



### **BILLIONAIRES & BALLOT BANDITS**

Greg Palast

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was not good enough for Singer and his hedge fund NML Capital. Singer demanded that a US court order Argentina to pay him ten times the amount he'd get under the Reagan deal. And to get his way, the Vulture also sued to stop the Big Banks from getting their own payments from the Reagan deal.

But then a bolt of legal lightning cooked the Vulture's goose: Obama's Justice Department and Hillary Clinton's State Department together filed an *amicus curiae*, a "friend of the court" brief in the case of *NML Capital et al. v. Republic of Argentina*. It wasn't all that friendly. Obama, a constitutional law professor, suddenly remembered that the president has the power, unique to the Constitution of the USA, to kick the Vulture's ass up and down the continent, then do it again.

Specifically, Obama and Clinton demanded the court throw out Singer's attempt to bankrupt Argentina (because that is what Singer's demand would have done).

This was Singer's nightmare: that the President of the United States would invoke his extraordinary constitutional authority under the Separation of Powers clause to block the Vulture and his hedge-fund buddies from making superprofits over the dead bodies of desperate nations.

The stakes in the legal-financial-political war are enormous, yet the real battle is hidden from the public view.

A titanic struggle had now been set in motion, a battle over billions, between the Obama administration and the wealthiest men in America, the hedge-fund billionaires, all out of sight of the public and press.

Argentina's consul called me from DC, stunned by the Clinton move. WTF? Did I have any info?

I said, this action goes way, way beyond Argentina. Obama and Clinton told the court that the Vulture was undermining the safety of the entire world financial system, destabilizing every financial rescue mission from South America to Greece to the Congo. (What would Romney do? His expected replacement for Clinton would be his chief foreign policy

advisor Dan Senor – currently on the payroll of . . . Paul Singer.)

Does Obama have the stones to stick with his decision? And do Singer and friends, working with Karl Rove, have the money-knife which could cut them off?

The Rove-bots are already flashing their blade: in June 2012, Republicans on the House Committee on Financial Services held an unprecedented emergency hearing about the president's stealth move on the Vulture. They sat for testimony by Ted Olsen, George Bush's former solicitor general, who attacked Obama and Clinton with code words and inscrutable legalismo, not once mentioning Singer or his hedge fund by name.

But in the White House and on the top floors of the Wall Street towers, they knew exactly what this was all about. And in the golf carts on Martha's Vineyard, they knew the Vulture had to be put in his place. Robert Wolf, golfing with President Obama on the Cape, was furious. The CEO of UBS (a.k.a. United Bank of Switzerland), had put together the Argentina deal. And Swiss bankers don't allow anyone to move the hole on their green.

Wolf bundled plenty of campaign loot for Obama, who made Wolf his "economic recovery" advisor. UBS has recovered nicely (with a sweet plea-bargain deal on criminal tax-evasion charges).

Now, UBS, JPMorgan, and Citibank chiefs are lined up with Obama and Clinton. The Establishment banks look upon the nouvelle vultures like Singer as economic berserkers, terrorists in a helicopter ready to pull the pin on the grenade. If Singer's demands aren't met, he'll blow up the planet's finance system. In this war of titans, Obama and Clinton are merely foot soldiers, not the generals. It's billionaire banking-powers versus billionaire hedge-fund speculators. One is greedy and scary and the other is greedy and plain dangerous. Take your pick.

Here is the real battle – a winner-take-all war over the control of the world financial system.

**Obama and Clinton told the court that the Vulture was undermining the safety of the entire world financial system, destabilizing every financial rescue mission from South America to Greece to the Congo**

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**Greg Palast** is an investigator of corporate fraud and racketeering turned journalist. He is the author of *New York Times* bestseller "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy" and "Armed Madhouse." His previous book was *Vultures' Picnic: In Pursuit of Petroleum Pigs, Power Pirates and High-Finance Carnivores* (2012)

**CT**

# Predators in the field

**Stacey Warde** worries about big cats with sharp claws

**The proximity of the cougar's print to my workplace made me reflect on the many days I've spent alone in the middle of the avocado and orange groves, out of shouting range**

**A**s a farmhand, I spend a lot of time in the orchards that border cougar country in rural coastal central California, halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

There are frequent sightings, from ranchers and people who live out in the wild, which surrounds our little beach village, Cayucos, “the little town that time forgot,” and, although I’ve had the good fortune, so far, of avoiding direct contact with one of these mountain lions, I’ve met far worse predators in the hills they roam.

A recent posting of a photo on Facebook from a neighboring farm showed the clear M-shaped padding of a California mountain lion’s paw.

“Holy shit!” I commented.

That’s so close, I thought, in cougar time, just minutes away. That beast could pounce and I’d never know it.

It happened not long ago in Orange County. A competitive and sponsored cyclist hunched over a broken bicycle chain in the Whiting Ranch wilderness area took a crushing bite to the back of his neck, as is the habit of cougars on the prowl for easy prey, and was dragged off the path and into the brush. He was eaten.

Not long after that, the same lion, apparently, dragged a woman cyclist by her head into the brush, but an alert friend grabbed the woman’s leg, fended off the lion, and saved her from certain death.

Authorities found the previous cyclist’s body partially buried nearby after tending the traumatized woman, and discovered a healthy 2-year-old male lion, weighing 115 pounds, lurking in the shadows, standing guard over his earlier quarry. Sheriff’s deputies shot and killed the lion.

The proximity of the cougar’s print to my workplace made me reflect on the many days I’ve spent alone in the middle of the avocado and orange groves, out of shouting range, hunched over, concentrating, like the cyclist, on the task at hand, oblivious to predators. And believe me, they’re out here.

I’m an easy target for a hungry lion.

Lately, I’ve spent most of my work hours in and between the rows, in the deep dark middle of a forest of green avocado trees, pruning, trimming suckers and deadwood, tending irrigation lines that provide water and nutrients, enjoying the fresh air and serenity of the outdoors.

It’s quiet steady work and I like it. It keeps me fit and no one bothers me, I go at my own pace. I’m alone. No office politics or subterfuge, no irritating phone calls and needless interruptions. I just go, and occasionally pause to observe the leavings and scat and rustlings of previous visitors from the surrounding wild.

I have the run of the orchard, which plays host to a myriad of beasts small and large. Wild boars, piglets, skunks, turkeys, deer, quail, coyotes, bobcats, squirrels, rats and

quite possibly mountain lions. I've seen all the creatures in both orchards, with the exception of mountain lions and wild boars, which is fine with me.

"Yeah, well, they're out there," says the ranch boss, stating the obvious, when I mention the image of tracks posted on Facebook, "but they're mostly looking for deer or..." he hesitates, "...sheep."

Sheep means domestic, which means close to home, next to the orchards. And there are plenty of deer in the orange grove, which means plenty of food for mountain lions. I see deer lounging in the shade between rows of large leafy green trees, tails twitching, ears alert, keeping watch, bolting into the brush when they see me.

The boss's remark only slightly assures me. "They're mostly nocturnal," he adds of the big cat. Small comfort, I think.

Now, throughout the day I keep close watch over my shoulders, frequently peering up and down and between the trees, searching for signs of life other than my own.

I'm somewhat clueless about the otherworldly stealth and elusiveness of these incredible creatures that cover huge swaths of ground in a day. Generally, they tend to shy away from encounters with humans. As development creeps into their range, however, encounters become more likely.

I imagine that I could fend one off with my long-handled cultivator, which has sharp heavy metal tines at one end and give the effect of a claw. I carry it with me during my treks through the orchards, twirling and spinning it like the wood staff I learned to wield as a weapon through years of aikido training.

I'd throw myself into the combat with that or with a much longer, extended pruning saw that I also carry and which cuts sharp.

Experts advise those who may find themselves face-to-face with a mountain lion to make themselves big, throw up their arms and yell and make lots of noise, the opposite of what we might want to do instinctively, which is to run.

My landlord, no chicken-hearted individu-

al, a rancher known for his daring, who pioneered big wave surfing with his friend Jerry Lopez on the North Shore of Oahu, told me of an encounter with a cougar during the night that had him crawling under his vehicle for protection. He had pulled up to a watering station on his ranch, just a few canyons down the highway from the orchards where I work. It was dark out and he did not see the animal. As he was about to adjust the valves, he heard a blood-curdling scream from the beast not 10 yards away.

"I've never been so terrified in my life," he said, explaining why he crawled under the four-wheeler instead of bolting. "I was shaking in my boots." After slipping away, he returned the next day to find the lion's kill on the other side of the tree where he'd been standing.

I stretch with my long-handled cultivator and breathe and feel the earth beneath my boots and know that I'd last about two seconds in such an encounter. My only consolation, I tell myself, and believe as much as possible: At least I won't go down without a fight.

Still, I strive to be vigilant and know that sooner or later, if it's not the mountain lion, something else is going to get me. It's going to get us all, whatever you're afraid of, it's going to get you. I've accepted that, even if daily I protest loudly against it. Being alone, mindful of the risks, ever watchful, I'm constantly reminded of my mortality and the shortness of life. Against the odds, I plow forward, lunging against the rocks and hardness of clay, which will eventually pull me down, while I scream: "I have a right to be here!"

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"There is a way that seems right to a man, but it's end is the way of death."

I read that the other day as I was thinking about the mountain lion prowling the fields nearby, wondering about its range and whether it might ever come into the orchard, and why was I still laboring as a farmhand. I read it on the marquee of the community church downtown, a quaint, Third Street edifice that gives food to the poor on Wednesdays and serves a community dinner at Thanksgiving.

**I'm somewhat clueless about the otherworldly stealth and elusiveness of these incredible creatures that cover huge swaths of ground in a day**

**I could get eaten by a mountain lion. It might be better than alternatives like poverty, cancer, a collision on Highway 1, or worse, encounters with some local ranchers, bullies at the corporate office, or men in suits**

The quote is from the book of Proverbs in the bible, calling into question our ability to choose aptly, calling out our need for guidance and protection. Whatever way one chooses, no matter how right it may seem at the time, its end is determined by forces beyond our control.

You may think you're wise and doing right, but God – and the harsh determinist nature of the universe – is the final judge of that.

The sign irritated me at first but I kept thinking about it: Am I on the right path? Do I belong here in the orchards? In this town? What guides me through these uncertain days where there are predators in the field? Am I making wise choices? What is the end of “my” way? What is the end of “anyone’s” way? What’s next?

It doesn't look too hopeful, at least not from here, not yet. I've been working in these hills and fields since 2008, when the economy drew near collapse, altering countless lives, including mine, putting millions on notice that nothing is secure, not your job, not your life, not institutions you trusted with your hard-earned savings, not your investment in real estate, nothing. I found farm labor one of the few viable options. Everything that I'd known until that point had been completely altered, or disappeared entirely, jobs, opportunities, the future....

I gave up publishing, one of the hardest hit industries during the near-collapse brought on mostly by Wall Street bankers who traded in and got filthy rich off of bad loans, and took to the local farm, exposing myself to an entirely different way of life, one that is full of unique hardships: dust, molds, chemicals, heat, exposure. It's wild and wonderful out here but it doesn't pay well, barely a living wage, and there are plenty of risks. I live from one paycheck to the next. I chose this path because it was the only one available at the time. So far, I like it yet keep wondering, where's the beef? Where's the real money, the real security?

Now, five years later, entering into my “golden” years, as so many millions of other hapless boomers, I wonder how my choices will play

out: This is the way that has seemed right to me, staying here, building ties, getting grounded, hoping for a better future, even if my budget allows me to take one day at a time.

Another day whips by, I keep watch over my health, critters in the wild and ill-tempered men, and wonder: What are my options and opportunities? With no retirement, no savings? What's next? “Hi, I'm Stacey! Welcome to Wal-Mart”? That option certainly seems like death to me. But what real options are there for the millions of Americans like me displaced forever through the greed of Wall Street bankers selling fraudulent loans?

I could get eaten by a mountain lion. It might be better than alternatives like poverty, cancer, a collision on Highway 1, or worse, encounters with some local ranchers, bullies at the corporate office, or men in suits. Every day I think about the shortness of life, about possibilities and how I might live more wakefully. The cougar has helped me with that.

I seek the companionship of those who have been touched in an honest way, who've been broken and humbled, rather than jaded and embittered, by their experiences, who know their limits and yet keep aiming beyond what they know, without losing their sense of what is possible and humane. Life is short, as we've heard so often, and so, between the mountain lion and choosing a path, I've been thinking a lot about how quickly time passes. At 55, I'm not so young any more.

“I'm an old man!” I'd yell at the mountain lion. “You don't want to eat me! I'd taste like shit!”

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Turkey vultures and red tailed hawks, a golden eagle, circle above, lifted by updrafts from the surrounding hills, which are barren and rocky. The trees, thankfully, are merely green with leaves, buds and new fruit, and nothing lurks in them.

I scan the ridge lines and arroyos, searching for movement in the dry weeds and grasses common to the coastal sage region after years of drought.

About a year ago, the ranch lost a sheep to a



mountain lion. I was drinking coffee with the boss, going over the day's work plan for my solo duties in the orchard, when he blurted, "Oh yeah, and watch out for the big cat!"

It took me a moment to register the "big cat" part of his comment. I was heading out the door when I realized what he meant. I turned to face the boss, "You mean, mountain lion?"

"Yeah, got one of our sheep last night."

"Should I be carrying a gun?" I offered.

"You can if it'll make you feel better but you'll be all right."

I spent that entire day creeped out by the possibility of crossing paths with that nocturnal sheep rustler.

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I encountered a mountain lion once in the wild of coastal northern California while camping on a sandbar on a creek between towering redwoods. I had just tucked into my sleeping bag next to my wife, who was already sleeping. We rested beneath a tarp I had rigged into a lean-to so we could look up at the stars and stay protected from the moisture of nightfall. The coals were still burning hot on the campfire I'd built in the sand at the opening to our shelter, keeping us warm. A full stack of deadwood I'd gathered in the forest stood ready to stir the fire again in the morning chill.

I had dozed off when I was awakened by the quick flip-flapping sound – splish, splash, splish – of a duck's webbed feet, scooting along the creek just below the sand bar.

I thought nothing of it until, seconds later, I heard the slow deliberate steps of a man walking up river. My watch showed just past 1 a.m.

Who would be walking upstream at this hour?

I grabbed my flashlight and shined it on the creek below where I'd heard the steps, and saw the unmistakable sleek shape and brown coloring of a mountain lion not 30 yards away. It stood frozen in the unnatural light, its legs stuck like posts in the middle of the dark creek.

The duck had long ago disappeared. Din-

ner escaped into the forest night. For whatever reason, call it a fool's curiosity, a death wish, the need to hail the beast, I whistled at it like a bird.

The animal turned to face me and began to walk across the creek.

"Oh fuck!" I yelled.

[For every "Oh fuck!" I've blurted, I wonder how different my life would be if I had shouted, "Oh yeah!"]

Fortunately, perhaps it was instinct, I had already jumped out of my bag before turning on the flashlight. I was on my feet, standing next to the pile of dead wood I'd stacked for the morning fire. I tossed several large pieces of the dry wood onto the hot coals and they burst into flame with a suddenness that startled even me. I shouted loudly through the fire, "Yeah!"

The cougar turned quickly away and ran back into the forest across the creek. "What's going on?" my wife asked sleepily.

I told her.

"Sometimes you're not so bright," she said, turning to go back to sleep. I sat by the fire for as long as possible, restless and unsettled, feeling stupid.

Now, as the shadows grow long, I'm keenly alert to any signs of intruders in the orchard. I watch for tracks, scat, and anything that would warn of the presence of a mountain lion.

The boss's "Well, yeah, they're out there" keeps playing through my mind. I spend less time crouched beneath the trees and more time looking over my shoulders, listening for crackling leaves and twigs, basically any sign of life in the darkening grove.

I've attuned my ears to the presence of raptors winging overhead in search of prey, the whoosh of air from their wings swooping like a phantom past the tops of avocado trees. I've developed an eye for signs of coyotes chewing on irrigation lines and pigs pushing up leaves in search of food.

I've spotted deer and bobcats, wild turkeys and the remains of skunks shredded by predators, perhaps a great horned owl or coyote.

The orchards teem with wildlife.

**I grabbed my flashlight and shined it on the creek below where I'd heard the steps, and saw the unmistakable sleek shape and brown coloring of a mountain lion not 30 yards away**

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## COUNTRY LIFE

**There are worse predators in this town than mountain lions, people who call themselves Christians, people who love to hate, people who refuse to give you water when you need it**

Experts advise against solo ventures into the wild. A good way to protect oneself from harm is to travel with a companion. I don't have that option and rather like working alone in the orchards.

It feels right most days. Still, I often wonder what I'm doing here, thinking that I might do better for myself, and long for the editor's chair and wish for another chance to publish a magazine (where lions of another sort can be confronted, even tamed).

In the five long years since the so-called Great Recession, I've worked in the fields, picked up side jobs in landscaping and window cleaning, pushing wheelbarrows and climbing ladders. I've been mostly a laborer and work hard for my money. At my age, that's no easy feat. The lion doesn't frighten me half as much, however, as the vultures on Wall Street, who were mostly responsible for the crash of 2008, and some of the people I've met here, who have their own predatory habits, which are more insidious, I think, than the much-maligned cougar.

I've witnessed beauty here that few ever get to see, and I'm grateful for that. There's blight out here too, but mostly it's fresh and clean, the air swept cool from coastal breezes, the land tended and watched, scrubbed by sun and drought.

Water is a precious resource in this dry, semi-arid climate but there seems to be plenty of it in this part of the country. It can vary from one canyon to the next, though, and not far from here farmers are hauling truckloads of water and paying lots for it to keep their trees alive.

We haven't had that problem in this canyon yet and hope that we never will. But if the drought continues, the worst on record, as it has for these many years, it could get ugly.

I've seen ugly when a farmer gets stingy with water. I suffered the loss of a full season's harvest of blueberries because we were refused water from our supplier, a long-time farmer.

Green berries about to turn color, promising a well-deserved bounty, fell off the plants by the buckets full. The plants went dry and

we lost our harvest, and possibly thousands of dollars.

I pleaded for water long before it got so bad. "You of all people, a farmer, must know how important it is for me to harvest those berries and get them to market," I argued.

"Well, get yourself a water tank," he said after a moment.

"Just let us have some water to get through the harvest," I said, "and then we'll get out of here." He did not want us there.

I don't know to this day what we did to turn him on us. Once, he said: "How come you have to be a fucking liberal?" Maybe it was political as much as it was personal. I thought he was a good guy, a good Christian who attends the church whose marque warns of the perils of the paths we choose.

"Oh yeah, he's a straight up guy," a local businessman, once said of him. I thought so too until he put me out of business. Now, he refuses to acknowledge me. There are worse predators in this town than mountain lions, people who call themselves Christians, people who love to hate, people who refuse to give you water when you need it.

The way of death really belongs to them. Frankly, I'd rather be eaten by a mountain lion than make friends with someone who is more like a wolf in sheep's clothing and goes to church. That's the choice I want to make, the path that seems right to me: Steer clear of predators, hypocrites and trouble.

I heard a story once about a hunter who was tracking a mountain lion in the hills not far from here. He found himself going in a circle after a while and then got a creepy feeling. He turned on instinct and not 15 yards behind him was the very lion he had been tracking.

Maybe it's a true story, maybe it's not. But it shows we are never far from trouble if we go looking for it. For now, I like working alone and keeping vigilant watch in cougar country. **CT**

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**Stacey Warde** is publisher of *The Rogue Voice*. This article is adapted from an earlier version that appeared on his blog, <http://theroguevoice.com>

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# The absurd hell that is the US police state

Stupidity and malice are rapidly becoming the new trademarks of a corrupt US justice system, writes **John W. Whitehead**

*“The greatest evil is not now done in those sordid ‘dens of crime’ that Dickens loved to paint. It is not done even in concentration camps and labour camps. In those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried, and minuted) in clean, carpeted, warmed and well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voices. Hence, naturally enough, my symbol for Hell is something like the bureaucracy of a police state or the office of a thoroughly nasty business concern.” – C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters**

Whether it’s the working mother arrested for letting her 9-year-old play unsupervised at a playground, the teenager forced to have his genitals photographed by police, the underage burglar sentenced to 23 years for shooting a retired police dog, or the 43-year-old man who died of a heart attack after being put in a chokehold by NYPD officers allegedly over the sale of untaxed cigarettes, the theater of the absurd that passes for life in the American police state grows more tragic and incomprehensible by the day.

Debra Harrell, a 46-year-old South Carolina working mother, was arrested, charged with abandonment and had her child placed

in state custody after allowing the 9-year-old to spend unsupervised time at a neighborhood playground while the mom worked a shift at McDonald’s. Mind you, the child asked to play outside, was given a cell phone in case she needed to reach someone, and the park – a stone’s throw from the mom’s place of work – was overrun with kids enjoying its swings, splash pad, and shade.

A Connecticut mother was charged with leaving her 11-year-old daughter in the car unsupervised while she ran inside a store – despite the fact that the child asked to stay in the car and was not overheated or in distress. A few states away, a New Jersey man was arrested and charged with endangering the welfare of his children after leaving them in a car parked in a police station parking lot, windows rolled down, while he ran inside to pay a ticket.

A Virginia teenager was charged with violating the state’s sexting law after exchanging sexually provocative videos with his girlfriend. Instead of insisting that the matter be dealt with as a matter of parental concern, police charged the boy with manufacturing and distributing child pornography and issued a search warrant to “medically induce an erection” in the 17-year-old boy in order to photograph his erect penis and compare it to the images sent in the sexting exchange. The police had already taken an initial photograph of the boy’s pe-

**Police charged the boy with manufacturing and distributing child pornography and issued a search warrant to “medically induce an erection” in the 17-year-old boy in order to photograph his erect penis**

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## CRIMINAL INJUSTICE

**Any deviations from the norm – especially those that offend the sensibilities of the “government-knows-best” nanny state or challenge the powers that be – become grist for prosecution, persecution and endless tribulations for the poor souls who are caught in the crosshairs**

nis against his will, upon his arrest.

In Georgia, a toddler had his face severely burned when a flash bang grenade, launched by a SWAT team during the course of a no-knock warrant, landed in his portable crib, detonating on his pillow. Also in Georgia, a police officer shot and killed a 17-year-old boy who answered the door, reportedly with a Nintendo Wii controller in his hands. The cop claimed the teenager pointed a gun at her, thereby justifying the use of deadly force. Then there was the incident wherein a police officer, responding to a complaint that some children were “chopping off tree limbs” creating “tripping hazards,” pulled a gun on a group of 11-year-old boys who were playing in a wooded area, attempting to build a tree fort.

While the growing phenomenon of cops shooting family pets only adds to the insanity (it is estimated that a family pet is killed by law enforcement every 98 minutes in America), it’s worse for those who dare to shoot a police dog. Ivins Rosier was 16 when he broke into the home of a Florida highway patrol officer and shot (although he didn’t kill) the man’s retired police dog. For his crime, the teenager was sentenced to 23 years in prison, all the while police officers who shoot family pets are rarely reprimanded.

Meanwhile if you’re one of those hoping to live off the grid, independent of city resources, you might want to think again. Florida resident Robin Speronis was threatened with eviction for living without utilities. Speronis was accused of violating the International Property Maintenance Code by relying on rain water instead of the city water system and solar panels instead of the electric grid.

Now we can shrug these incidents off as isolated injustices happening to “other” people. We can rationalize them away by suggesting that these people “must” have done something to warrant such treatment. Or we can acknowledge that this slide into totalitarianism – helped along by overcrimi-

nalization, government surveillance, militarized police, neighbors turning in neighbors, privatized prisons, and forced labor camps, to name just a few similarities – is tracking very closely with what we saw happening in Germany in the years leading up to Hitler’s rise to power.

When all is said and done, what these incidents reflect is a society that has become so bureaucratic, so legalistic, so politically correct, so militaristic, so locked down, so self righteous, and so willing to march in lockstep with the corporate-minded police state that any deviations from the norm – especially those that offend the sensibilities of the “government-knows-best” nanny state or challenge the powers that be – become grist for prosecution, persecution and endless tribulations for the poor souls who are caught in the crosshairs.

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Then there are the incidents, less colorful perhaps but no less offensive to the sensibilities of any freedom-loving individual, which should arouse outrage among the populace but often slip under the radar of a sleeping nation.

For instance, not only is the NSA spying on and collecting the content of your communications, but it’s also going to extreme lengths to label as “extremists” anyone who attempts to protect their emails from the government’s prying eyes. Adding insult to injury, those same government employees and contractors spying on Americans’ private electronic communications are also ogling their private photos. Recent revelations indicate that NSA employees routinely pass around intercepted nude photos, considered a “fringe benefit” of surveillance positions.

A trove of leaked documents reveals the government’s unmitigated gall in labeling Americans as terrorists for little more than being suspected of committing “any act that is ‘dangerous’ to property and intended to influence government policy through intimidation.” As The Intercept reports: “This

combination – a broad definition of what constitutes terrorism and a low threshold for designating someone a terrorist – opens the way to ensnaring innocent people in secret government dragnets.” All the while, the TSA, despite the billions of dollars we spend on the agency annually and the liberties to which its agents subject travelers, has yet to catch a single terrorist.

No less disconcerting are the rash of incidents in which undercover government agents encourage individuals to commit crimes they might not have engaged in otherwise. This “make work” entrapment scheme runs the gamut from terrorism to drugs. In fact, a recent report released by Human Rights Watch reveals that “nearly all of the highest-profile domestic terrorism plots in the United States since 9/11 featured the ‘direct involvement’ of government agents or informants.”

Most outrageous of all are the asset forfeiture laws that empower law enforcement to rake in huge sums of money by confiscating cash, cars, and even homes based on little more than a suspicion of wrongdoing. In this way, Americans who haven’t been charged with a crime, let alone convicted of wrongdoing, are literally being subjected to highway robbery by government agents offering profit-driven, cash-for-freedom deals.

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So who or what is to blame for this bureaucratic nightmare delivered by way of the police state? Is it the White House? Is it Congress? Is it the Department of Homeland Security, with its mobster mindset? Is it some shadowy, power-hungry entity operating off a nefarious plan?

Or is it, as Holocaust survivor Hannah Arendt suggests, the sheepish masses who mindlessly march in lockstep with the government’s dictates – expressing no outrage, demanding no reform, and issuing no challenge to the status quo – who are to blame for the prison walls being erected around us? The author of *The Origins of Totalitari-*

anism, Arendt warned that “the greatest evil perpetrated is the evil committed by nobodies, that is, by human beings who refuse to be persons.”

This is where democracy falls to ruin, and bureaucracy and tyranny prevail.

As I make clear in my book, “*A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*”, we have only ourselves to blame for this bureaucratic hell that has grown up around us. Too many of us willingly, knowingly and deliberately comprise what Arendt refers to as “cogs in the mass-murder machine.”

These cogs are none other than those of us who have turned a blind eye to the government corruption, or shrugged dismissively at the ongoing injustices, or tuned out the mayhem in favor of entertainment distractions. Just as guilty are those who have traded in their freedoms for a phantom promise of security, not to mention those who feed the machine unquestioningly with their tax dollars and partisan politics.

And then there are those who work for the government, federal, state, local or contractor. These government employees – the soldiers, the cops, the technicians, the social workers, etc. – are neither evil nor sadistic. They’re simply minions being paid to do a job, whether that job is to arrest you, spy on you, investigate you, crash through your door, etc. However, we would do well to remember that those who worked at the concentration camps and ferried the victims to the gas chambers were also just “doing their jobs.”

Then again, if we must blame anyone, blame the faceless, nameless, bureaucratic government machine – which having been erected and set into motion is nearly impossible to shut down – for the relentless erosion of our freedoms through a million laws, statutes, and prohibitions.

If there is any glimmer of hope to be found, it will be at the local level, but we cannot wait for things to get completely out of control. If you wait to act until the SWAT

**A recent report released by Human Rights Watch reveals that “nearly all of the highest-profile domestic terrorism plots in the United States since 9/11 featured the ‘direct involvement’ of government agents or informants”**

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## CRIMINAL INJUSTICE

**This much I know: we are not faceless numbers. We are not cogs in the machine. We are not slaves. We are people, and free people at that**

team is crashing through your door, until your name is placed on a terror watch list, until you are reported for such outlawed activities as collecting rainwater or letting your children play outside unsupervised, then it will be too late.

Obedience is the precondition to totalitarianism, and the precondition to obedience is fear. Regimes of the past and present understand this. "The very first essential for success," Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, "is a perpetually constant and regular employment of violence." Is this not what we are seeing now with the SWAT teams and the security checkpoints and the endless wars?

a. As the Founders understood, our freedoms do not flow from the government. They were not given to us, to be taken away at the will of the State; they are inherently

ours. In the same way, the government's appointed purpose is not to threaten or undermine our freedoms, but to safeguard them.

Until we can get back to this way of thinking, until we can remind Americans what it really means to be a free American, and learn to stand our ground in the face of threats to those freedoms, and encourage our fellow citizens to stop being cogs in the machine, we will continue as slaves in thrall to the bureaucratic police state. **CT**

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*John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and author. He is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State" (SelectBooks) is available at amazon.com*

**A GOVERNMENT OF WOLVES**  
THE EMERGING AMERICAN POLICE STATE  
JOHN W. WHITEHEAD

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**GOVERNMENT OF WOLVES**  
THE EMERGING AMERICAN POLICE STATE  
JOHN W. WHITEHEAD

"John Whitehead is one of the most eloquent and knowledgeable defenders of liberty, and opponents of the growing American police state, writing today. I am pleased to recommend *A Government of Wolves* to anyone interested in learning how modern America increasingly resembles a dystopian science fiction film instead of a Constitutional Republic." —RON PAUL

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# Worse than Orwell's worst nightmare

**John Pilger** is appalled at the lack of dissident voices in the mainstream media

The other night, I saw George Orwell's 1984 performed on the London stage. Although crying out for a contemporary interpretation, Orwell's warning about the future was presented as a period piece: remote, unthreatening, almost reassuring. It was as if Edward Snowden had revealed nothing, Big Brother was not now a digital eavesdropper and Orwell himself had never said, "To be corrupted by totalitarianism, one does not have to live in a totalitarian country."

Acclaimed by critics, the skilful production was a measure of our cultural and political times. When the lights came up, people were already on their way out. They seemed unmoved, or perhaps other distractions beckoned. "What a mindfuck," said the young woman, lighting up her phone.

As advanced societies are de-politicised, the changes are both subtle and spectacular. In everyday discourse, political language is turned on its head, as Orwell prophesied in 1984. "Democracy" is now a rhetorical device. Peace is "perpetual war". "Global" is imperial. The once hopeful concept of "reform" now means regression, even destruction. "Austerity" is the imposition of extreme capitalism on the poor and the gift of socialism for the rich: an ingenious system under which the majority service the debts of the few.

In the arts, hostility to political truth-telling is an article of bourgeois faith. "Picasso's red

period," says an *Observer* headline, "and why politics don't make good art." Consider this in a newspaper that promoted the bloodbath in Iraq as a liberal crusade. Picasso's lifelong opposition to fascism is a footnote, just as Orwell's radicalism has faded from the prize that appropriated his name.

A few years ago, Terry Eagleton, then professor of English literature at Manchester University, reckoned that "for the first time in two centuries, there is no eminent British poet, playwright or novelist prepared to question the foundations of the western way of life". No Shelley speaks for the poor, no Blake for utopian dreams, no Byron damns the corruption of the ruling class, no Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin reveal the moral disaster of capitalism. William Morris, Oscar Wilde, HG Wells, George Bernard Shaw have no equivalents today. Harold Pinter was the last to raise his voice. Among the insistent voices of consumer feminism, none echoes Virginia Woolf, who described "the arts of dominating other people ... of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital".

At the National Theatre, a new play, *Great Britain*, satirises the phone hacking scandal that has seen journalists tried and convicted, including a former editor of Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World*. Described as a "farce with fangs [that] puts the whole incestuous [media] culture in the dock and subjects it to merciless ridicule", the play's targets are the "blessedly funny" characters in Britain's tabloid press. That

**The once hopeful concept of "reform" now means regression, even destruction. "Austerity" is the imposition of extreme capitalism on the poor and the gift of socialism for the rich: an ingenious system under which the majority service the debts of the few**

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## PROPAGANDA BOOM

**A “precision” 500-pound bomb fell directly on their small mud, stone and straw house, leaving a crater 50 feet wide. Lockheed Martin, the plane’s manufacturer’s, had pride of place in the *Guardian’s* advertisement**

is well and good, and so familiar. What of the non-tabloid media that regards itself as reputable and credible, yet serves a parallel role as an arm of state and corporate power, as in the promotion of illegal war? The Leveson inquiry into phone hacking glimpsed this unmentionable. Tony Blair was giving evidence, complaining to His Lordship about the tabloids’ harassment of his wife, when he was interrupted by a voice from the public gallery. David Lawley-Wakelin, a film-maker, demanded Blair’s arrest and prosecution for war crimes. There was a long pause: the shock of truth. Lord Leveson leapt to his feet and ordered the truth-teller thrown out and apologised to the war criminal. Lawley-Wakelin was prosecuted; Blair went free.

Blair’s enduring accomplices are more respectable than the phone hackers. When the BBC arts presenter, Kirsty Wark, interviewed him on the tenth anniversary of his invasion of Iraq, she gifted him a moment he could only dream of; she allowed him to agonise over his “difficult” decision on Iraq rather than call him to account for his epic crime. This evoked the procession of BBC journalists who in 2003 declared that Blair could feel “vindicated”, and the subsequent, “seminal” BBC series, *The Blair Years*, for which David Aaronovitch was chosen as the writer, presenter and interviewer. A Murdoch retainer who campaigned for military attacks on Iraq, Libya and Syria, Aaronovitch fawned expertly.

Since the invasion of Iraq – the exemplar of an act of unprovoked aggression the Nuremberg prosecutor Robert Jackson called “the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole” – Blair and his mouthpiece and principal accomplice, Alastair Campbell, have been afforded generous space in the *Guardian* to rehabilitate their reputations. Described as a Labour Party “star”, Campbell has sought the sympathy of readers for his depression and displayed his interests, though not his current assignment as advisor, with Blair, to the Egyptian military tyranny.

As Iraq is dismembered as a consequence of the Blair/Bush invasion, a *Guardian* headline

declares: “Toppling Saddam was right, but we pulled out too soon”. This ran across a prominent article on 13 June by a former Blair functionary, John McTernan, who also served Iraq’s CIA installed dictator Iyad Allawi. In calling for a repeat invasion of a country his former master helped destroy, he made no reference to the deaths of at least 700,000 people, the flight of four million refugees and sectarian turmoil in a nation once proud of its communal tolerance.

“Blair embodies corruption and war,” wrote the radical *Guardian* columnist Seumas Milne in a spirited piece on 3 July. This is known in the trade as “balance”. The following day, the paper published a full-page advertisement for an American Stealth bomber. On a menacing image of the bomber were the words: “The F-35. GREAT For Britain”. This other embodiment of “corruption and war” will cost British taxpayers £1.3 billion, its F-model predecessors having slaughtered people across the developing world.

In a village in Afghanistan, inhabited by the poorest of the poor, I filmed Orifa, kneeling at the graves of her husband, Gul Ahmed, a carpet weaver, seven other members of her family, including six children, and two children who were killed in the adjacent house. A “precision” 500-pound bomb fell directly on their small mud, stone and straw house, leaving a crater 50 feet wide. Lockheed Martin, the plane’s manufacturer’s, had pride of place in the *Guardian’s* advertisement.

The former US secretary of state and aspiring president of the United States, Hillary Clinton, was recently on the BBC’s *Women’s Hour*, the quintessence of media respectability. The presenter, Jenni Murray, presented Clinton as a beacon of female achievement. She did not remind her listeners about Clinton’s profanity that Afghanistan was invaded to “liberate” women like Orifa. She asked Clinton nothing about her administration’s terror campaign using drones to kill women, men and children. There was no mention of Clinton’s idle threat, while campaigning to be the first female president, to “eliminate” Iran, and nothing about her support for illegal mass surveillance and



the pursuit of whistle-blowers.

Murray did ask one finger-to-the-lips question. Had Clinton forgiven Monica Lewinsky for having an affair with husband? “Forgiveness is a choice,” said Clinton, “for me, it was absolutely the right choice.” This recalled the 1990s and the years consumed by the Lewinsky “scandal”. President Bill Clinton was then invading Haiti, and bombing the Balkans, Africa and Iraq. He was also destroying the lives of Iraqi children; Unicef reported the deaths of half a million Iraqi infants under the age of five as a result of an embargo led by the US and Britain.

The children were media unpeople, just as Hillary Clinton’s victims in the invasions she supported and promoted – Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia – are media unpeople. Murray made no reference to them. A photograph of her and her distinguished guest, beaming, appears on the BBC website.

In politics as in journalism and the arts, it seems that dissent once tolerated in the “mainstream” has regressed to a dissidence: a metaphoric underground. When I began a career in Britain’s Fleet Street in the 1960s, it was acceptable to critique western power as a rapacious force. Read James Cameron’s celebrated reports of the explosion of the Hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll, the barbaric war in Korea and the American bombing of North Vietnam. Today’s grand illusion is of an information age when, in truth, we live in a media age in which incessant corporate propaganda is insidious, contagious, effective and liberal.

In his 1859 essay “On Liberty” to which modern liberals pay homage, John Stuart Mill wrote: “Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.” The “barbarians” were large sections of humanity of whom “implicit obedience” was required. “It’s a nice and convenient myth that liberals are peacemakers and conservatives the warmongers,” wrote the historian Hywel Williams in 2001, “but the imperialism of the liberal way may be more dangerous because of its open-ended nature: its conviction that it represents a superior form of

life.” He had in mind a speech by Blair in which the then prime minister promised to “reorder the world around us” according to his “moral values”.

Richard Falk, the respected authority on international law and the UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine, once described as “a self-righteous, one-way, legal/moral screen [with] positive images of western values and innocence portrayed as threatened, validating a campaign of unrestricted political violence”. It is “so widely accepted as to be virtually unchallengeable”.

Tenure and patronage reward the guardians. On BBC Radio 4, Razia Iqbal interviewed Toni Morrison, the African-American Nobel Laureate. Morrison wondered why people were “so angry” with Barack Obama, who was “cool” and wished to build a “strong economy and health care”. Morrison was proud to have talked on the phone with her hero, who had read one of her books and invited her to his inauguration.

Neither she nor her interviewer mentioned Obama’s seven wars, including his terror campaign by drone, in which whole families, their rescuers and mourners have been murdered. What seemed to matter was that a “finely spoken” man of colour had risen to the commanding heights of power. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon wrote that the “historic mission” of the colonised was to serve as a “transmission line” to those who ruled and oppressed. In the modern era, the employment of ethnic difference in western power and propaganda systems is now seen as essential. Obama epitomises this, though the cabinet of George W. Bush – his warmongering clique – was the most multiracial in presidential history.

As the Iraqi city of Mosul fell to the jihadists of ISIS, Obama said, “The American people made huge investments and sacrifices in order to give Iraqis the opportunity to chart a better destiny.” How “cool” is that lie? How “finely spoken” was Obama’s speech at the West Point military academy on 28 May. Delivering his “state of the world” address at the graduation ceremony of those who “will take American leadership” across the world, Obama said, “The

**Today’s grand illusion is of an information age when, in truth, we live in a media age in which incessant corporate propaganda is insidious, contagious, effective and liberal**

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## PROPAGANDA BOOM

**If Israel's atrocities in Gaza become too gruesome to ignore, it would put Egyptian President Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi under pressure to open the Egyptian crossing into Gaza**

United States will use military force, unilaterally if necessary, when our core interests demand it. International opinion matters, but America will never ask permission ...”

In repudiating international law and the rights of independent nations, the American president claims a divinity based on the might of his “indispensable nation”. It is a familiar message of imperial impunity, though always bracing to hear. Evoking the rise of fascism in the 1930s, Obama said, “I believe in American exceptionalism with every fibre of my being.” Historian Norman Pollack wrote: “For goose-steppers, substitute the seemingly more innocuous militarisation of the total culture. And for the bombastic leader, we have the reformer manqué, blithely at work, planning and executing assassination, smiling all the while.”

In February, the US mounted one of its “colour” coups against the elected government in Ukraine, exploiting genuine protests against corruption in Kiev. Obama’s national security adviser Victoria Nuland personally selected the leader of an “interim government”. She nicknamed him “Yats”. Vice President Joe Biden came to Kiev, as did CIA Director John Brennan. The shock troops of their putsch were Ukrainian fascists.

For the first time since 1945, a neo-Nazi, openly anti-Semitic party controls key areas of state power in a European capital. No Western European leader has condemned this revival of fascism in the borderland through which Hitler’s invading Nazis took millions of Russian lives. They were supported by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), responsible for the massacre of Jews and Russians they called “vermin”. The UPA is the historical inspiration of the present-day Svoboda Party and its fellow-travelling Right Sector. Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnybok has called for a purge of the “Moscow-Jewish mafia” and “other scum”, including gays, feminists and those on the political left.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has ringed Russia with military bases, nuclear warplanes and missiles as part of its Nato Enlargement Project. Reneging on

a promise made to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990 that Nato would not expand “one inch to the east”, Nato has, in effect, militarily occupied eastern Europe. In the former Soviet Caucasus, Nato’s expansion is the biggest military build-up since the Second World War.

A Nato Membership Action Plan is Washington’s gift to the coup-regime in Kiev. In August, “Operation Rapid Trident” will put American and British troops on Ukraine’s Russian border and “Sea Breeze” will send US warships within sight of Russian ports. Imagine the response if these acts of provocation, or intimidation, were carried out on America’s borders.

In reclaiming Crimea – which Nikita Khrushchev illegally detached from Russia in 1954 – the Russians defended themselves as they have done for almost a century. More than 90 per cent of the population of Crimea voted to return the territory to Russia. Crimea is the home of the Black Sea Fleet and its loss would mean life or death for the Russian Navy and a prize for Nato. Confounding the war parties in Washington and Kiev, Vladimir Putin withdrew troops from the Ukrainian border and urged ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine to abandon separatism.

In Orwellian fashion, this has been inverted in the west to the “Russian threat”. Hillary Clinton likened Putin to Hitler. Without irony, right-wing German commentators said as much. In the media, the Ukrainian neo-Nazis are sanitised as “nationalists” or “ultra nationalists”. What they fear is that Putin is skilfully seeking a diplomatic solution, and may succeed. On 27 June, responding to Putin’s latest accommodation – his request to the Russian Parliament to rescind legislation that gave him the power to intervene on behalf of Ukraine’s ethnic Russians – Secretary of State John Kerry issued another of his ultimatums. Russia must “act within the next few hours, literally” to end the revolt in eastern Ukraine. Notwithstanding that Kerry is widely recognised as a buffoon, the serious purpose of these “warnings” is to confer pariah status on Russia and suppress news of the Kiev regime’s war on its own people.

A third of the population of Ukraine are Russian-speaking and bilingual. They have long sought a democratic federation that reflects Ukraine's ethnic diversity and is both autonomous and independent of Moscow. Most are neither "separatists" nor "rebels" but citizens who want to live securely in their homeland. Separatism is a reaction to the Kiev junta's attacks on them, causing as many as 110,000 (UN estimate) to flee across the border into Russia. Typically, they are traumatised women and children.

Like Iraq's embargoed infants, and Afghanistan's "liberated" women and girls, terrorised by the CIA's warlords, these ethnic people of Ukraine are media unpeople in the west, their suffering and the atrocities committed against them minimised, or suppressed. No sense of the scale of the regime's assault is reported in the mainstream western media. This is not unprecedented. Reading again Phillip Knightley's masterly "The First Casualty: the war correspondent as hero, propagandist and mythmaker", I renewed my admiration for the *Manchester Guardian's* Morgan Philips Price, the only western reporter to remain in Russia during the 1917 revolution and report the truth of a disastrous invasion by the western allies. Fair-minded and courageous, Philips Price alone disturbed what Knightley calls an anti-Russian "dark silence" in the west.

On 2 May, in Odessa, 41 ethnic Russians were burned alive in the trade union headquarters with police standing by. There is horrifying video evidence. The Right Sector leader Dmytro Yarosh hailed the massacre as "another bright day in our national history". In the American and British media, this was reported as a "murky tragedy" resulting from "clashes" between "nationalists" (neo-Nazis) and "separatists" (people collecting signatures for a referendum on a federal Ukraine). The *New York Times* buried it, having dismissed as Russian propaganda warnings about the fascist and anti-Semitic policies of Washington's new clients. The *Wall Street Journal* damned the victims - "Deadly Ukraine Fire Likely Sparked by Rebels, Gov-

ernment Says". Obama congratulated the junta for its "restraint".

On 28 June, the *Guardian* devoted most of a page to declarations by the Kiev regime's "president", the oligarch Petro Poroshenko. Again, Orwell's rule of inversion applied. There was no putsch; no war against Ukraine's minority; the Russians were to blame for everything. "We want to modernise my country," said Poroshenko. "We want to introduce freedom, democracy and European values. Somebody doesn't like that. Somebody doesn't like us for that."

According to his report, the *Guardian's* reporter, Luke Harding, did not challenge these assertions, or mention the Odessa atrocity, the regime's air and artillery attacks on residential areas, the killing and kidnapping of journalists, the firebombing of an opposition newspaper and his threat to "free Ukraine from dirt and parasites". The enemy are "rebels", "militants", "insurgents", "terrorists" and stooges of the Kremlin. Summon from history the ghosts of Vietnam, Chile, East Timor, southern Africa, Iraq; note the same tags.

Palestine is the lodestone of this unchanging deceit. On 11 July, following the latest Israeli, American equipped slaughter in Gaza - 80 people including six children in one family - an Israeli general writes in the *Guardian* under the headline, "A necessary show of force".

In the 1970s, I met Leni Riefenstahl and asked her about her films that glorified the Nazis. Using revolutionary camera and lighting techniques, she produced a documentary form that mesmerised Germans; it was her *Triumph of the Will* that reputedly cast Hitler's spell. I asked her about propaganda in societies that imagined themselves superior. She replied that the "messages" in her films were dependent not on "orders from above" but on a "submissive void" in the German population. "Did that include the liberal, educated bourgeoisie?" I asked. "Everyone," she replied, "and of course the intelligentsia." **CT**

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*John Pilger's new film, "Utopia", has received glowing reviews in the UK and Australia*

**Summon from history the ghosts of Vietnam, Chile, East Timor, southern Africa, Iraq; note the same tags. Palestine is the lodestone of this unchanging deceit**

# Superbugs threaten to return us to Dark Ages

The last pandemic to kill millions of people was the Spanish flu outbreak at the end of World War I. **Trevor Grundy** wonders when the next will hit us

**In the course of three months, over 43,000 soldiers succumbed to the disease. One of the most striking of the complications was haemorrhage from mucous membranes, especially from the nose, stomach and intestine**

The pandemic that swept across the globe at the end of the First World War (1914-1918) has been described by various historians as the greatest medical holocaust in history – alongside AIDS, tuberculosis, smallpox, malaria, cholera and typhus.

Some media commentators have drawn parallels between the devastation caused by Spanish ‘flu with the Black Death from 1347-1351 when the rat and flea carried bubonic plague wiped such a large percentage of the European population. Such comparisons are exaggerated. The bubonic plague wiped out close to 200 million people, roughly one third of Europe’s population in the tumultuous 14th century.

Although no-one is able to tell us exactly how many died, it is common to focus on the impact Spanish influenza had in 1918 on Western countries where systematic information on mortality has been available for a number of years. Estimates are anything from 20 million to 40 million, substantially more than the estimated 18 million (10 million combatants and eight million civilians) killed in the war itself. More died in a single year than were killed in the four years of the Black Death from 1347-1351)

But the highest death rates were neither in America or Europe. They were in Asia and Africa – not surprisingly because the majority of Westerners had access to reasonably decent

food and shelter which was not the case in countries such as India, China or most places in Africa. Mortality ranged from about five per 1000 in Europe and USA: nine per 1000 in Latin America: 15 per 1000 in Africa and 20-34 per 1000 in Asia.

The Dutch researcher and specialist in African social history Professor Jan-Bart Gewald told a gathering of academics in 2007 that “Spanish influenza” originated not in Spain (which was neutral throughout the 1914-1918 conflict) but in France at a military camp where over 100,000 men lived beside pigs and poultry.

Others say it started in China and then spread to Kansas USA, crossing over into Europe and then Africa and other parts of the world by German and Allied soldiers locked in one of the most appalling slaughters in history.

In March 1918, the deadly virus struck at military camps in America, where soldiers waited shipment to the war in Europe.

In the course of three months, over 43,000 soldiers succumbed to the disease. One of the most striking of the complications was haemorrhage from mucous membranes, especially from the nose, stomach and intestine. Bleeding from the ears and skin also occurred but the majority of deaths were from bacterial pneumonia. The disease killed 20 percent of those infected, as opposed to the usual ‘flu epidemic of 0.5 percent.



**Lawrence Vambe in a photo taken shortly after Zimbabwe's Independence in 1980 at Domboshava outside Harare. He became a leading journalist and author.** Photo: Trevor Grundy

The epidemic did not kick off in Spain but the name stuck – Spanish ‘flu.

Like so much else, the devastating impact of the epidemic was played down by the victorious Allies and within a few years the public’s memory of the Spanish ‘flu fell away and historians call it “the forgotten epidemic.” The names of millions of the war dead are remembered on stones and walls around the world, but there’s no clear division between those who died in combat and those who died of influenza at the war’s end in November.

But forgotten??

Well, almost. It was seen as an extension of one of the many tragedies of the war.

“On the battlefield of Northern France,” Gewalt explains, “troops on either side of the line, sometimes 500 meters apart, were infected by airborne diseases. In the prisoner of war camps and gas-ridden trenches and

dugouts of horrendous war the disease spread like wildfire and lay the seeds for further outbreaks further afield.”

Hundreds of thousands of men were shipped to Africa where a fierce war between the Germans and British (backed by South Africans and Rhodesians) raged in East Africa.

In 1998, Professor Howard Phillips in the Department of History at the University of Cape Town and Professor David Killingray, organized a conference entitled “Reflections on the Spanish Flu Pandemic after 80 years: Causes, Course and Consequences.” Little known studies were examined including Professor Terence Ranger’s “The Influenza Pandemic in Southern Rhodesia: A Crisis of Comprehension,” which he compiled in 1988.

There have been hundreds of learned articles about the impact influenza made on America, Britain, and Europe – relatively few

**Like so much else, the devastating impact of the epidemic was played down by the victorious Allies and within a few years, the public’s memory of the Spanish ‘flu fell away and historians call it “the forgotten epidemic”**

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## THE GREAT FLU

**“Every morning, one of them would milk a cow and feed me with fresh milk. Without those dedicated nuns, I would not have survived”**

on the devastation it caused in Africa.

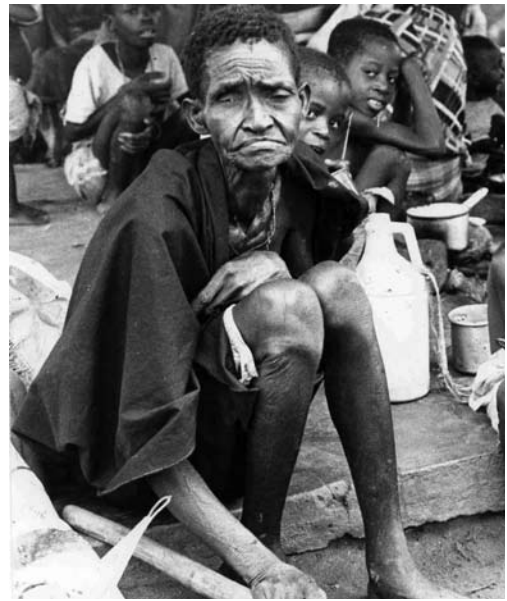
In the north-eastern districts of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) the pandemic arrived in the context of war and famine.

German soldiers under Lettow von Vorbeck had routed British colonial forces, sacked Kasama and seemed set to continue onwards.

Ian Phimister tells us in “Wangi Kolia – Coal, Capital and Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe 1894-1954” (Baobab Books Harare, 1994) that the first case of Spanish influenza in neighbouring Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) came in October 1918, one month before the war’s end.

He writes: “From there the epidemic spread swiftly to Gwelo (Gweru), Que Que (Kwekwe) and Salisbury (Harare) before engulfing other towns and districts the line of rail. Wankie’s turn came on October 14, 1918 “and within the space of a few days nearly two thousand natives were prostrated. The influenza pandemic struck the colliery with explosive force. Like most other large Southern Rhodesian mines, Wankie’s overcrowded, filthy compound provided optimum conditions for the rapid spread of the disease. Underground labourers, subject to variations in temperature as they left hot and confined working conditions below ground for the surface where there were no change houses, to suffer most from the pandemic. Hundreds of miners drew the appropriate conclusion and fled to the compound into the surrounding countryside. Some undoubtedly carried infection into outlying villages but many more unquestionably saved their own lives by escaping from the colliery. By 24 October, an estimated 100 black workers had died and by the end of the month the total number of dead had more than doubled. One white miner died in the same period. For nearly two weeks Wankie was at a complete standstill.”

Francis L. Coleman records in “The Northern Rhodesian Copper Belt 1899-1962” (Manchester University Press, 1971) that the price of copper rose from £61 to £170 a ton by the end of 1916, but it was Katanga, in neighboring Congo (Zaire) that prospered the most be-



**The poor, the old, the wretched and the hungry will always be the most vulnerable during epidemics. The next one could be mainly man made.**  
Photo: Trevor Grundy

cause of the drop in production in Zambia.

The pandemic spread, fast as a bullet and against the fear of an invisible foe there is no heroic combat.

Lawrence Vambe MBE, the Zimbabwean journalist and author (“An Ill-fated People” and “From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe” (both published by William Heinemann, London 1972 and 1976 respectively) was born in March 1917. His mother died the following year, a victim of Spanish influenza. Vambe and his siblings were brought up by German nuns at Chishawasha Mission (Roman Catholic) outside Salisbury (Harare). “Every morning, one of them would milk a cow and feed me with fresh milk. Without those dedicated nuns, I would not have survived,” he told me. “I wonder how many young Zimbabweans today know what happened – the devastation caused by that terrible epidemic.”

Blacks blamed whites: whites blamed blacks.

In South Africa, the authorities reacted by passing more segregation legislation – the Native Urban Areas Act – to separate the races. Although in some hospitals white nurses

were told to treat blacks because the authorities were so frightened it would spread even further without treatment.

In “Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia 1902-1935” (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) Jock McCullough tells us that the “natives” were forbidden from travelling on trains. Chiefs were instructed to keep their people confined to their villages. The state requisitioned cattle and petrol supplies. Almost ten times more Europeans – about 1,300 of them – died from Spanish ‘flu than were killed in the first chimurenga (war in the Shona language) of 1897.

Africans started to believe that the white-man’s chimurenga in Europe (they were drawn into it because they were then part of the British Empire) had caused the epidemic which turned customary life upside down in both of the Rhodesias (Zambia and Zimbabwe).

So many women were sick. Men had to grind corn and prepare meals. Diets changed. Cassava – a relatively easy crop to grow requiring less labour than maize – became suddenly popular.

Melvin E. Page writing in “The Chiwaya War: Malawians and the First World War” (Boulder Press Colorado, 2000) tells us that the connection between the war and the pandemic of influenza was not only immediate but causal. A common expression was that ‘war air’ had brought the new and devastating disease into Africa because of white men fighting one another thousands of miles away in Europe.

A young woman in the Eastern Cape, Non-tetha Nkwenkwe, was overcome by Spanish ‘flu but she recovered and said she had received divine messages. She began preaching and prophesizing that influenza was a divine warning of things to come – a taste of what God was bringing on – Judgment Day.

The colonial authorities put her and her followers into prison.

Against the background of an estimated 30-50 million deaths in just over one year, it

hardly matters where the epidemic started or who was responsible.

It was no respecter of race or ethnic group. All human beings were fair game, as they are now if British Prime Minister David Cameron is right that super bugs resistant to antibiotics could return us to the European Dark Ages, a time so chillingly and brilliantly described by the American historian Barbara Tuchman in “The Distant Mirror” (Macmillan, 1979)

A report in the *Times* (July 2, 2014) said that a team of economists will lead an international group of experts aiming to spur on a new generation of antibiotics. Jim O’Neill, a former chief economist at Goldman Sachs has been asked to consider how governments would be able to afford to pay pharmaceutical companies to produce the right drugs which could overcome future epidemics and how poorer countries (many of them in Africa) can be encouraged to improve the control of existing antibiotics which are often sold over the counter in shops.

Jeremy Farra, director of the Wellcome Trust, says that drug-resistant bacteria, viruses and parasites are driving a global health crisis. “This,” he says, “threatens not only our ability to treat deadly infections, but almost every aspect of modern medicine from cancer treatment to caesarean sections, therapies that save thousands of lives every day rely on antibiotics that could soon be lost.”

“But only five new types of antibiotics have been introduced since the 1960s and the supply of newly developed drugs is dwindling as companies see little profit in working on treatments designed only to be used as a last resort,” said the *Times*.

And, as usual, it will be the poor, the homeless, the already ill and hungry who will bear the brunt of the next medical cataclysm given that we’re all too silly, greedy or both to let anything like that happen again. **CT**

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**Trevor Grundy** is a British journalist who lived and worked in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. He works in wEngland as a researcher and author

**Africans started to believe that the white-man’s chimurenga in Europe (they were drawn into it because they were then part of the British Empire) had caused the epidemic**

# Still defiant after 30 years

No coal mines survive in County Durham in England, but this year's annual miners' gala in the city still attracted 150,000 supporters who remembered the part played by Margaret Thatcher's Tory government in the destruction of the coal mining industry and Britain's most powerful trade union

Words: **Peter Lazenby** Photos: **Joan Heath**

**Durham's narrow streets are thronged and lined with tens of thousands of people to see the march of trades union banners and their bands**

**D**urham is a small and ancient English cathedral city with a history stretching back more than 1,000 years. The cathedral was founded in 1093 on the site of an old church in the era of Roman Catholic domination of Britain. It took more than 70 years to build. Sons followed fathers in the building of the cathedral – stonemasons, carpenters. One can only marvel at their achievements in a time when only the most basic tools were available. To the secular the cathedral is a tribute to the skills of the workers who built it, rather than to a deity.

Adjacent to the magnificent cathedral is Durham Castle, a medieval fortification which is now part of the University of Durham. Cathedral and castle sit atop a rocky promontory and are the striking feature of the skyline far beyond Durham city. Ancient streets wind down to the city centre from the cathedral and castle – streets which have been trod by monks, pilgrims, worshippers and warriors over the centuries.

On Durham Miners' Gala day these streets are thronged and lined with tens of



thousands of people watching the parade of trades union banners and bands. At the bottom of the incline, the marchers walk across a bridge over the River Wear before arriving outside the County Hotel, used as headquarters for gala organisers and their visiting guests.

The march covers a short distance, maybe a mile, yet takes up to six hours as each band stops beneath the balcony of the hotel to play a piece specially selected and practiced for the occasion.





A stirring moment as the Easington Lodge banner is preceded by its band, past Durham's County Hotel

By mid-morning the sidewalks are almost unpassable, such is the density of the crowd applauding the groups of marchers. Each banner has as many as six “carriers” – two holding the banner’s poles, with two at the front and back holding ornate ropes fixed to the top of the banner poles, to secure the banner from gusts of wind. Behind the banners follow thousands of union members and their families.

The gala field, approached via a short slope, is already occupied by thousands of

supporters, and filling even more with the drawn-out arrival of the procession.

The gala has a carnival atmosphere. But the speeches from the platform, lasting around two hours, are a serious business – highly political, rousing, but drawing laughter as well as cheers as speakers lampoon the government, the boss-class, and other targets of the day.

By late afternoon the gala is over, but the streets remain thronged until after midnight, the city’s pubs packed with revellers.

**The march covers a short distance, maybe one mile, yet takes up to six hours to complete**

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## IN THE PICTURE



Marching on from the County Hotel in front of the Durham Miners' Association banner.



Craighead Lodge band marches along the street.



Banner of the Chopwell Lodge of the NUM.

**The effect of mine closures was shocking: no jobs for young people, helplessness, frustration, followed by a growth in drug abuse and crime in many communities**

The first coal miners' union in the Durham area was founded in 1869, and staged its first gala in 1871. At its peak, when hundreds of coal mines operated in the North of England, it attracted crowds of 300,000 – seven times the population of the city of Durham. This year's gala, the 130th in its history, took place during the 30th anniversary of the start of the year-long 1984-5 miners' strike against pit closures. There were 150,000 attendees, although Durham no longer has any coal mines, or miners. The last deep coal mine in the Durham coalfield was shut down in 1993 by the Conservative Government, as it fulfilled its intention to destroy the National

Union of Mineworkers – Britain's most powerful trades union. Destruction of the union through the closing of the coal mines wreaked havoc on Britain's close-knit mining communities. The loss of a mine meant the loss of each community's economic base, along with the businesses which depended on the miners' wages.

The effect was shocking: no jobs for young people, helplessness, frustration, followed by a growth in drug abuse and crime in many communities. The Conservatives threw more than 150,000 coal miners out of work, meaning near-destitution for many of them and their families. For every miner's job there



**Brass band leads the banner and balloon of the Unison Union.**

were reckoned to be three more in associated industries – equipment manufacture and transport among them. So the Conservatives’ act of political vandalism against the mining industry cost some 600,000 jobs.

There was more to the Conservatives planned destruction of the National Union of Mineworkers, though. The miners were the “shock troops” of Britain’s trades union movement. In 1974 they had brought down a Conservative government; with the miners gone, the way was open to attack rest of the unions. It is significant that when the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 there were 13.5 million

trades union members in Britain. Today there are 6.5 million. After wrecking Britain’s coal mining industry – the country’s only long-term indigenous source of fuel – the government attacked manufacturing industries such as steel and ship-building. Such was the Conservatives’ determination to wreck Britain’s trades union movement.

Why? Because the movement was the only barrier between the Conservatives and their ultimate goal: the transformation of Britain from a social-democratic nation, with a welfare state, publicly-owned national health service, publicly-owned housing, and publicly-owned industries, including the supply

**The Conservatives threw more than 150,000 coal miners out of work, meaning near-destitution for many of them and their families**

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## IN THE PICTURE



Among the speakers (from left): Christine Blower, National Union of Teachers; Dennis Skinner MP; Dave Hopper, Durham Miners' Association; Steve Gillan, Prison Officers' Association; Paul Kenny, GMB.



The historic Follonsby banner is paraded through the narrow streets of Durham .

**After wrecking Britain's coal mining industry, the government attacked manufacturing industries such as steel and ship-building**

of power, operated for the benefit of all the people. Into what? Into a country where every service would be based on profit.

The transformation continues as publicly-owned health care services are being handed to private companies. The welfare safety net which assisted disabled and unemployed people and others is being dismantled. All that was once owned by the state, and operated in the interest of the people, is being handed to corporations whose only motive is profit. Extra taxes are being piled on the poor, while taxes on Britain's wealthiest people have been cut. Billions of pounds has been transferred from the poor to the rich.

The Conservatives have enthusiastic support for their project from the media. Eighty per cent of the British Press pours out a daily flood of right-wing propaganda, while the state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation is manipulated by the Government.

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All is not lost, however, for the unions that remain – many operating in what is left of the public sector – are fighting back. An estimated 1.5 million public sector workers took strike action on July 10. Resistance is growing. More strikes are planned.

The growth in support for the Durham Miners' Gala is another sign of the fight-back.



**A pipe band leads the Eldon colliery union branch's ornate banner**

It is also evidence that while the mining communities were wrecked by the coal mine closures, the spirit of many of those communities lives on. For many in the Durham area it focuses on the preservation of the banners of the National Union of Mineworkers. Each coal mine, employing roughly 1,000 miners, had its own branch of the union, and its own union banner. Durham used to have 70 deep coal mines.

Among the union officials elected annually by each branch was the position of “banner man.” To this miner fell the responsibility of caring for the branch’s trades union banner, keeping it maintained and ready for use.

After the mine closures, across the former coalfield of Durham “banner support groups” sprang up. In many communities, where a banner had disappeared after the closure of the coal mine, a replica is created. Damaged banners have been meticulously repaired.

There are regular exhibitions of banners, which are brought out each year for the Durham Miners’ Gala. More banners are being rediscovered or recreated every year, and these new banners are greeted with great ceremony at the Gala.

The gala is known historically as “the Big Meeting,” and seeing the crowd of tens of thousands listening attentively to the outspo-

**Eighty per cent of the British Press pours out a daily flood of right-wing propaganda, while the state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation is manipulated by the Government to suit its ends**

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## IN THE PICTURE



Kibblesworth Lodge banner celebrates Aneurin Bevin.



Crowds pack the racecourse awaiting the banners.

**More banners are being re-discovered or recreated every year, and these new banners are greeted with great ceremony at the Gala**

ken speeches explains why. When the speakers – including national union leaders, socialist Members of Parliament, international guests and two miners from Eastern Ukraine – finish, the banners are marched from the field, again led by their bands. But in the city centre the four newly discovered or re-created banners take another route, up a steep incline to the hill-top cathedral that dominates the city, where a congregation of 1,200 awaits the arrival of the new banners, to be blessed by the Bishop of Durham.

This year there were 80 mining union banners at the gala, although only three deep mines remain in Britain. There were many more from other unions and organisations, and also banners from schools, carried by pupils. Next year

there will be more banners representing former mining communities of the Durham coalfield. The spirit of the miners will live on. **CT**

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*Peter Lazenby is a lifelong British trades union activist and journalist, and is a reporter for the Morning Star newspaper, a left national newspaper supporting Britain's labour and trades union*  
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*Joan Heath is a university lecturer, journalist, former practising solicitor, and a member of the management committee of the co-operative which owns the Morning Star. She is also a member of a collective which makes banners for the labour movement.*



The banners and bands arrive at the racecourse, where the festivities are already under way.

## Legacy of an industry's destruction

The destruction of Britain's deep coal mining industry meant the abandonment of the country's only indigenous fuel – which would have lasted for 200 years. Also abandoned was the world's most advanced research into Clean Coal Technology, which would have vastly reduced the environmental damage caused by burning fossil fuel. Gas and oil reserves beneath the North Sea are running out, so more than 50 million tons of coal a year are imported for Britain's power stations from countries which include Russia, and Colombia which has a record of exploiting child labour in its mines.

Fuel bills in Britain have soared as a result. The gas and electricity industries and power stations, once publicly-owned, are now in private hands. The owning companies' only motive is profit. Britain now suffers the existence of fuel poverty – people facing a choice of eating or heating. They can't do both. Every winter 30,000 pensioners die from cold-related illnesses, while "food banks" have sprung up across the country, providing parcels of non-perishable food for families facing hunger.

This is the legacy of the destruction of Britain's coal mining industry and of the National Union of Mineworkers. – **Peter Lazenby**

**This year there were 80 mining union banners at the gala, even though only three deep coal mines remain in Britain**

# Scottish identity – what is it?

In this excerpt from her new book, *Blossom*, **Leslie Riddoch** argues that Scotland has the resources, the history and the character to become an independent nation, ruled from Edinburgh, not London

**Scotland has natural and cultural assets other countries would give their eye teeth to possess**

Let's lay this one to rest straight away – Scotland has a more distinctive personality than many independent nations. We have massive energy resources – Ireland has next to none. We have a strategic location the Vikings once killed for (literally). We have more viable and internationally ranked cities than England. We land a third of the fish caught by the fish-mad Icelanders and a natural scenic splendour that makes other Europeans weep. We have more coastline than Germany, a richer folk tradition than the Irish (OK, we could have a weew row over that one) a list of inventors proportionately longer than any other nation on earth and world-renowned food, energy and engineering firms as a result.

We have natural and cultural assets other countries would give their eye teeth to possess – but somehow the overall result is not a generally healthy nation with affordable energy, comfortable homes, inventive industry and creative lives spent sailing, rowing, fishing, ski-ing, walking and generally guddling around in nature.

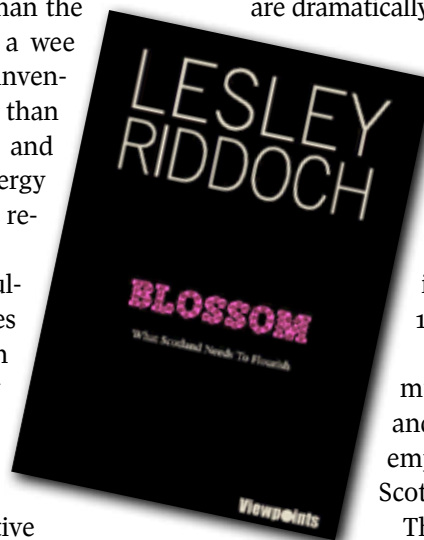
We could spend a lot of time

arguing over what we already know – Scotland has some of the worst health, employment and social outcomes in Europe and one of the biggest income gaps. If you live in one of the ten per cent poorest neighbourhoods you are five times more likely to experience crime, twice as likely to have chronic or serious health problems that result in emergency hospital admission and your kids will score only half the combined academic results of their most affluent S6 peers in the ten per cent richest neighbourhoods. These are dramatically unequal outcomes.

The picture of income inequality is equally stark. In 2010/11 the poorest 30% of Scots received 14% of national income and there's been very little change in this income inequality since 1998/99.

So let's not spend too much time arguing. Income and health, education and employment outcomes in Scotland are very uneven.

The only real question is why. In fact, Scotland has a long legacy of unequal access to wealth, opportunity and assets – so unequal that Scotland's natural advantages are like familiar,



**BLOSSOM**  
Leslie Riddoch  
Luath Press, Edinburgh  
£11.99





Yes Scotland's first annual Independence rally in Edinburgh in 2012.

Photo: Phyllis Buchanan

family heirlooms for the few and untouchable, almost imaginary treasures for the many. Inequality has nipped Scotland in the bud.

Over generations this blight has inhibited confidence, soured capacity, silenced hope, repelled the independent-minded and eroded confidence in Mother Scotland's ability to care for all her weans. In some ways that's to our credit. Most Scots feel uneasy enjoying pleasures that cannot be shared. Sadly most also believe the few will fix things without pressure. We might as well expect Black Buns to vote for Hogmanay.

Confidence arises from owning assets, running lives and taking decisions. That confidence – the life-blood of a nation – should pump around the whole of the Scottish body politic. It doesn't. Ownership of assets and decision making power are held in relatively few hands and modern Scotland too often resembles a medieval fiefdom run by the top, from the centre and for

the Establishment.

This country can blossom – but we need to recognise the real problem first.

Scots currently inhabit a large, beautiful garden whose owners can't manage it properly and won't trust anyone else to do the job. As a result monocultures run riot, dominant plants stifle diversity, native species grow in the shade, climbers are unsupported, soil is exhausted, seeds are blown elsewhere, weeds run unchecked and litter fills corners. Passers-by admire the backdrop, spot the potential but puzzle over the general lack of care. There are a small number of stunning exhibits but in general, all in the garden is not rosy. Somewhere under the weeds the little white rose of Scotland is still alive – growing, budding but never quite flowering for more than a few precious days.

How can it? A competent gardener is needed to restructure the garden from the grassroots upwards – but the best candidate

**Ownership of assets and decision making power are held in relatively few hands and modern Scotland too often resembles a medieval fiefdom run by the top, from the centre and for the Establishment**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**The current working definition of Scottishness is male to the core and ties a nation psychologically and symbiotically to a neighbour uber Scots would rather not emulate**

is busy. That best candidate is the Scottish people. We could inhabit a well-tended, diverse garden, home to foreign exotica, hardy hybrids and flowering, reproductive and distinctively Scottish plants. But it would take a collective commitment of time and effort... and we must start from where we are. Divided.

Some see Scotland as a viable proposition, others privately think the country is a hopeless basket case with large, sick, hopeless urban populations who cannot fend for themselves and dispersed rural communities inhabiting land so barren it's only fit for grouse moors. If we are to move forward, we must move forward together. So let's try to tackle this divided opinion not deny it.

Scotland has inequality. Does it have an underlying identity beyond that – something that genuinely unites all its people? Something you might call a national identity?

Yes it does – in so far as any nation does. But it may not revolve around the symbols of nationhood most commonly associated with the Scots.

And that's a paradox worth dwelling on a little.

It's more than 300 years since the Treaty of Union. Britain PLC has partly de-merged its acquisitions.

Scotland has regained a parliament, is set to vote on independence and feelings of Scottishness abound. No wonder. It would be hard to think of a nation with more visible, durable and internationally accepted calling cards of identity – Tartan, Bagpipes, Auld Lang Syne, Haggis, Burns Whisky, Golf.

And yet.

Do all Scots identify with these Balmoralised symbols of nationhood?

Disconnected from the environment that created them, kilt wearing, single-malt quaffing, Pringle wearing, golf-mad Scots seem strangely inauthentic. Like an identikit picture on a Wanted poster – each piece may be accurate but the whole face doesn't

look like anyone real.

Nonetheless at some point all Scots have tried to pour themselves into the part. Like 90 minute Christians who appear in church for marriages and funerals, 90 minute Scots “turn out” for Burns Nights, Stag nights, Hen nights, Rugby matches, Tartan Army events, weddings, funerals and barmitzvahs. When identity is demanded or ritual is required, men advance and women recede – the kilt appears, a few poems or songs are dusted down, bawdy sideways snipes are made at women and serious drinking helps lads focus on the only point of Scottish identity that seems to matter.

Not being English.

Not indulging in pedantry, moderation, village greens, David Cameron, New Labour, house-price discussions, real ale, cricket or morris dancing.

It's easy to sneer. But if this describes the English – what does it make the Scots?

Immoderate, excessive, concrete-jungle tolerating, Old Labour, vodka drinking, football-worshipping, hard men? The current working definition of Scottishness is male to the core and ties a nation psychologically and symbiotically to a neighbour uber Scots would rather not emulate.

If anyone hadn't noticed, the English are currently on a quest of their own – driven to self-discovery by the apparently resurgent Celts. Jeremy Paxman, Kate Fox, David Starkey, Simon Schama – the bookshelves are groaning with attempts to scrape together a DNA of the English that does not rely on Empire, Good Queen Bess, 1966, Dunkirk and Eastenders.

If being English is currently a puzzle – being not English is an absolute nonsense.

Expressed succinctly in Renton's speech, by Irvine Welsh in *Trainspotting*,

“I hate being Scottish. We're the lowest of the fucking low, the scum of the earth, the most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat into civilization. Some people hate the English, but I don't. They're just wankers. We, on the

other hand, are colonized by wankers. We can't even pick a decent culture to be colonized by. We are ruled by effete arseholes. It's a shite state of affairs and all the fresh air in the world will not make any fucking difference."

It's no wonder young Scots want out – into a bigger or smaller world where identity can be defined by sex, drugs, music, shoe size, Facebook friends – anything other than the dull, out-dated strait-jacket that accompanies the geographical accident of being Scottish.

And yet.

Try believing Scots are not a distinctive group but just self-deluded northern Brits surfing the net and watching MTV in a globalised world devoid of local cultural reference. Andy does. This earnest Scottish TV researcher came over to chat after a BBC discussion programme in which I was the only person to think Scottish independence was a perfectly reasonable political choice. The comment seemed to bother him. Like I had otherwise been on or near his wavelength but with one apparent endorsement of Scotland as a meaningful entity, had jumped straight onto another planet.

Looking at this well-meaning, background-denying product of modern Britain, it seemed like time for mischief.

Was Andy watching MTV in a terraced house – the traditional unit of "British" housing?

Nope – he lived in a tenement.

Did he take A levels like most British students?

Nope – he took Highers. A more rounded education according to his mum.

Did his parents own their house – like the average Briton?

Nope, and unlike most English students he stayed in their council flat during university. Cheaper.

After MTV would he stay in to watch the Ashes followed perhaps by the Vicar of Dibley?

Nope. Unlike anyone south of the Border

he'd listen to a witheringly sarcastic phone-in about the day's football (Off the Ball) watch a sitcom about two auld geezers on a bleak housing estate (Still Game), and stay in guzzling lager because he had no cash to buy a round.

Ever thought of going out and just buying a pint for yourself, Andy?

Dinnae be daft.

Aye – Andy disnae quite speik proper English when he disnae huv tae either.

With Scotland's best fishing on the doorstep, does Andy own a fishing rod – or a boat perhaps?

Naw – and he disnae dae "country" dancing or shoot deer up the arse either.

Do any of his family own land?

C'mon, we live in a council house.

OK Andy.

Did you vote for Britain's favourite painting in 2005 – Turner's Fighting Temeraire (The Battle of Trafalgar)? Or Britain's favourite poem in 2009 – Rudyard Kipling's If?

Nope – Andy's top marks would go to Dali's Christ of St John of the Cross (a picture he knows in great detail because unlike many English galleries, access to Scottish public art has always been free). And on best poem he'd be torn between Burns' Tam O'Shanter, MacDiarmid's Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle and McCaig's lines about his best poem being two fags long.

And yes, before I ask, Andy's dad did work in the shipyards, lived in a council house, refused to buy it on principle, voted Labour until the shipyards closed, switched to the SNP, decided they were Tartan Tories and then supported Tommy Sheridan until the Parliament Building costs overran – at which point he stopped voting altogether and died (prematurely) from lung disease five years ago.

Andy – how did your mum vote?

D'you know her son never actually asked.

Andy, catch a grip.

The Scots are not just what happens when you vary England's default settings –

**Andy's dad did work in the shipyards, lived in a council house, refused to buy it on principle, voted Labour until the shipyards closed, switched to the SNP, decided they were Tartan Tories . . .**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**Try suggesting Spain and Portugal, the Netherlands and Belgium, Norway and Sweden should merge. Try it – and stand well back**

more rain, less winter daylight, more poverty, more hills, more cloud, less sun, fewer people, less ethnic diversity. Though these basic physical and social truths have certainly helped shape identity and behaviour.

Scots are not just intemperate versions of our more measured southern cousins. We don't live in the same houses, laugh at the same jokes, read the same books, or share the same life expectancy. We don't have the same capacity to commercialise ideas. We don't have the same informal rules about collective behaviour. We don't speak quite the same language and we don't (publicly) aspire to the same social goals. We don't have the same history, weather, geology, bank notes, education system, legal system or tradition of ownership. We don't vote the same way, we don't die the same way.

Scots are no more northern variants of the English than the Irish are western ones. Indeed, our mission may be to offer the English a (currently undesired) revival as southern Celts or the Anglo-Norse.

Neither is the Scottish identity just a bundle of remnants – a set of random behaviours by mindless contrarians welded together into a dangerously unstable and unpredictable personality. Although on a bad day it can feel that way. Scots are quite obviously and consistently different from their neighbours – English, Irish or Norwegian. But different enough?

Scots are (characteristically) in two minds. Most folk believe national difference must be enormous before policy or governance arrangements need pay the blindest bit of attention. Thus Scotland must be as unlike England as Brazil is unlike Denmark before difference is worth recognising or nurturing. National difference must be as stark as two primary colours, as absolute as gender and as non-negotiable as the Iron Curtain before it can hope to justify “nationhood”. In practice, this “high bar” of distinction is not louted by many independent European states. And yet, perversely, the Scots demand it of themselves.

The Nordic nations differ by only a few shades of grey. The Low Countries have pastel coloured borders. And yet try suggesting Spain and Portugal, the Netherlands and Belgium, Norway and Sweden should merge. Try it – and stand well back. In mainland Europe, slight but important points of cultural distinction form the cornerstone of each nation state. I remember interviewing the Sinn Fein leader and former IRA man Martin McGuinness for Channel Four's People's Parliament during that bizarre period in the 80s when his voice was “banned” on TV and radio. If Sinn Fein got their wish and Northern Ireland became part of the Irish Republic, I asked, what would be visibly different to the casual onlooker.

He thought for a while and said, “the street signs would be in Irish Gaelic.”

The same thought occurred to every member of the production team – is that all? Could such a tiny change possibly justify those long decades of struggle, death, grief and violence?

And yet, travel from Germany to the Netherlands and street signs are often the only visible evidence of border crossing. In fact, Scotland does look different – there are virtually no terraced houses in Scottish cities and virtually no tenements in English ones (though I'll grant you Newcastle stretches the point). And yet we speak the same language, share institutions and recent centuries of history with our southern cousins. So the Martin McGuinness question arises again. Does a very different history once upon a time justify change today? Do real social and cultural differences justify full, political independence?

Look around. Some distinctive nations choose to go it alone – others opt to remain within larger states. Former parts of Denmark are now within the Federal Republic of Germany, the population of the United States of America contains more Spanish speakers than Spain, Russia straddles five time zones and the single state of Brazil is physically larger than the fifty states of Eu-

rope. Enormous diversity can remain within some single states (though usually with more devolution than Britain has tolerated) whilst other nations depart from remarkably similar states as soon as war, occupation or revolution permits.

Of course Scotland is a sufficiently distinctive nation to consider political independence. But distinctiveness alone is not enough. Another vital ingredient is needed before a set of people are ready to go the extra mile. And since even David Cameron concedes Scotland could “wash its face” economically let’s not spend time on distractions.

The missing ingredient is more important and less tangible than money. You could call it a form of love. That warm, mutual feeling of confidence and trust between independent people that encourages them to join forces, share resources and change living arrangements to face the future together.

But hey – love? In a debate about Scottish independence?

That’s a toughie for a nation that doesn’t do emotion (without a large skelp of drink).

So instead of examining the strength of bonds that exist between Scots – we focus on the bonds that would be broken if we left the UK. Instead of considering the vitality of new working relationships we concentrate on the pain of dissolving old ones. The constitutional debate focuses on detail, process, money and currency – like a divorce where hurt, betrayal and despair cannot be discussed and practicalities assume paramount and disproportionate importance. Who will have the stereo – and can its future be sensibly discussed in isolation from the CDs?

But national self-determination isn’t about technicalities – it’s about identity, confidence and trust.

The technical questions are not trivial. Almost everything written about Scottish independence eventually touches on the Black Gold. Will oil sustain a new Scottish

state or does recent banking collapse suggest Scotland cannot rely on its own resources to stand alone? Can Alex Salmond guarantee Scots will be better off in an independent Scotland?

Of course he can’t.

If Scots need guarantees and cast-iron certainty, the country will remain forever a grudging and grumbling part of the UK. None of our small, independent neighbours broke away from larger states to be better off. Far from it. When Norway announced independence from Sweden in 1905 it immediately became the second poorest nation in Europe. The tiny independent nation of Iceland which boasted the world’s first parliament reluctantly returned to Norwegian control in the 13th century after tree-felling turned the island into a northern desert. Still their tiny population (smaller than Dundee) seized its chance for independence without a moment’s hesitation when the Germans occupied Stepmother Denmark in 1944.

Back then, Iceland had no geo-thermal power, nor had it fought and won the Cod Wars nor gambled and lost everything thanks to a bunch of cocky young bankers. It did have an influx of confident American soldiers at the Keflavik airbase. And then it took a leap in the dark.

So it goes. The urge to break away from an existing union – political, marital or financial – is rarely totally rational, or economically prudent. There may be preparation, debate and plans – but eventually caution becomes an anchor and the voyage must begin.

Of course, the cautious Scots may yet be the exception that proves the rule. Scotland approaches the independence question with another big current running – localism. It may not be necessary for Scotland to prove its people are dramatically different or guaranteed to have short-term economic success to argue that 5 not 55 million people is a better size for governance. And don’t forget events. With a public-sector disman-

**The urge to break away from an existing union – political, marital or financial – is rarely totally rational, or economically prudent**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**No offence to speakers of Welsh, Gaelic or Scots, but language alone does not sustain nor fully define a nation – at least not this one**

tling coalition government at Westminster who knows what MacRubicon a cost-cutting London government may soon cross and how Scots will react.

Culture, oil, politics, history and size. Scotland has as many reasons for seeking independence as any other restless nation – although currently the argument convinces more voters south of the border than north of it. A majority of English people has consistently supported Scottish independence since the 2007 SNP victory raised the question. Some – like English socialist Mark Perryman – think the departure of the collectivist Scots would provide a long overdue jolt to the complacent English left. Others – like ex *Sun*-editor Kelvin McKenzie think Scots are whingeing, subsidy junkies and cannot wait to halt the “gravy train” heading north. Mind you, I’m sure he thinks the same about Yorkshire.

Such strong southern support for Scottish independence could have been harnessed to prompt a UK-wide debate about federalism, devolution and democratic change right across the paternalistic, top-down United Kingdom. But it hasn’t.

It’s been far easier to portray Scotland’s endless agonising over constitutional status as a right royal pain. We do want more powers, don’t we? A bit... no a bit more... no that’s too much....no maybe it’s fine.....what about a referendum with one question.... or two ....no wait.....

It’s been far easier to mock northern indecision, view Scottish independence as Alex Salmond’s personal obsession and his party’s landslide majority in 2011 as a form of mass hypnosis. It’s not so easy to regard the plodding Scots as a revolutionary vanguard destined to challenge Britain’s centralised, top-down, class-ridden, unequal society until something better emerges. But who else will? The conservative English? Or the Welsh? Gubbed by their neighbours in 1283, our Celtic cousins were forced to dance to an English tune in education, health, local government, housing and even politi-

cal outlook, despite devolution. In the last Westminster elections just 1.7% of Scottish MPs were Conservative compared to 20% of Welsh MPs and 56% of English MPs with the Northern Irish water muddied by different political loyalties – as is their prerogative.

1.7%, 20% and 56%. Those figures tell us something.

The distinctiveness of Wales is largely cultural not political or institutional. Welshness is kept alive by male-voice choirs, Welsh language schools, S4C, the Methodist Chapel and (once upon a time) by campaigns against holiday homes. No-one can be in any doubt the Welsh are culturally distinct from the English. But has that been enough to create feelings of nationhood or a drive towards a new Welsh state? Like defiant prisoners whistling Home of our Fathers as the firing squad take aim, Welsh culture has been the last defence against economic and social domination. The Scots have always had more.

No offence to speakers of Welsh, Gaelic or Scots but language alone does not sustain nor fully define a nation – at least not this one. Law abiding, rational, dour-old souls that we are, Scots are defined by outlooks created by institutions that predate (and have survived) the Union. By an education system that seeks breadth not specialism. By a legal system based on statute not precedent. By a Kirk not led by the Head of State. By housing policy not historically based on sale and inheritance but (for better and worse) on tenancy and rent. By an economy based (recently) on state activity not private enterprise. And by an endless and hopeless quest for kinship and connection in lieu of the social democratic state Scots have lacked the opportunity (and determination) to build.

All that most Britons notice about Scots is that we wear kilts – but who doesn’t these days – and have two public holidays at Hogmanay.

In fact, we do many things differently north of the border but since we don’t quite

understand why any more, there's no reason anyone else should. As a result Scots are often propping up what doesn't matter and ignoring what does.

Occasionally we catch the scent of a blossom that has been taken from the room – like Hugh MacDiarmid's little white rose of Scotland that “smells so sweet and breaks the heart.”

What is it then? What is Scottishness?

It isn't the Scottish football team – however convenient a repository that is for outpourings of male emotion.

It isn't – sadly –organised communitarian endeavour. Scots don't do credit unions, local energy companies, community trusts or local asset ownership (at least not on the scale of our English and Irish neighbours although we are finally catching up). We don't do local governance – perversely in a tiny country we do extremely large.

It isn't a tradition of healthy living. We don't do the body as a temple, exercise, eating vegetables or getting outdoors. We don't live in nature. We don't build in wood.

Our national dish is Chicken Tikka Masala washed down with Irn Bru or super lager.

We reassert our collective proletarian identity with every curry we order, every sun-bed we occupy, every triple voddie we demolish in the name of a “good time” and every year of life expectancy we thereby lose. All to prove we are Scottish – the underdogs against the British Bulldogs. David against Goliath. Wee, tough Billy Bremner against louche, decadent David Beckham. Real men against New Men....with women making the tea.

We cling to a tough-talking, self-mocking, cynical world outlook instead of recognising such gallows humour for what it is – a coping mechanism created in days of appalling poverty and maintained by affluent descendants of impoverished Scots out of guilt and solidarity with those still mired in near-permanent inequality. A world we dare not fully acknowledge, tackle or fix.

So Scots generally ignore the paradox of an empty rural landscape in which there is somehow no affordable space for us to live. We blame the resulting sky-high property prices on wealthy incomers seeking second homes instead of an absurd land scarcity tolerated by successive Scottish governments. We allow city to remain divided from country and therefore – uniquely at our latitude – have no weekend hut or cabin culture. We are at home in the pub, on the terracing, in the DIY store or on the couch – not in nature. We live indoors like troglodytes amongst the finest natural scenery in northern Europe. Land remains overpriced and under-used – people-free thanks to planning preference, economic difficulty and landowner diktat. Empty, man-made desolation is now “Natural Scotland”.

We tell ourselves it doesn't matter. Modern Scots are predominantly urban Scots after all with gyms for exercise, parks for dog-walking, some of Europe's most popular cities for leisure and trips abroad for guaranteed sunshine. What happens in run-down rural areas is not our problem. What goes wrong in wrecked urban communities is not our fault.

Life is good – by and large. Scotland bumps along. Most of the nation's health problems are concentrated in a few postcodes the rest don't visit. Folk are generally happier than they are down south. And when the economy improves / Labour gets back into power/ Scotland votes for independence everything will get better.

But no matter which constitutional scenario is favoured an underlying assumption is shared – that the rising tide will lift all boats. And of course it will – except those that are beached, poorly made, badly anchored or holed below the waterline. In some parts of Scotland, those are the majority. Inequality is fiercely resistant to well-meaning warm words, pilot projects, superficial change, sticking plaster and rising tides. It would be great if there was an easier way to restore the great overgrown garden

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**Polls consistently show Scots want more economic control and tax-raising based here – but maybe not total independence. Not yet**

of Caledon than hoiking out the virulent weeds and staking up overwhelmed native climbers. There isn't.

Scots are currently being asked to define Scottishness through the constitutional prism of independence alone. But perhaps that isn't a wide, searching or engaging enough ball-park. Polls consistently show Scots want more economic control and tax-raising based here – but maybe not total independence. Not yet. Desire for the "Full Monty" is being blocked, perhaps by general happiness within the UK, perhaps by 300 years as a junior partner but possibly by something that's been around longer. Chronic disempowerment. The kind that arises from centuries living on land we could not own, piers we could not use, rivers we could not fish and forests we could not enter. Centuries inhabiting homes we could not (till recently) own, improve or inherit and cities, towns and villages whose shape we (still) cannot really determine. Centuries speaking in dialects and languages we could not use in official situations, thinking about realities, histories and people we would never hear on the radio or TV channels of our own public broadcasting service.

The Scots much discussed "lack of confidence" cannot be remedied by simply "pulling ourselves together" developing "positive self-talk" or "thinking big." Our disempowerment arises from several centuries experience of "keep out" and "keep off" signs. A sense of involvement can't suddenly just be switched on – especially when involvement in Scottish democracy has become so limited.

Awash with credit, homes, cars, jacuzzis, flat-screen televisions, patios, fridge-freezers and leather three piece suites – most modern Scots are leading lives of relative comfort compared to our forebears. But are we in control of this country? Are Scots actively shaping Scotland or are we still passively shaped by it – absent experts, distant officials, old choices, old loyalties, old divi-

sions, old money and all?

This may seem a harsh, even alarmist critique of a country that's evidently not on its collective knees. The blight of inequality affects only some – by definition. The fear of "falling behind" encourages just as strong and self-improving a reflex amongst others. On a good day, no symptoms of general malaise are visible. But look closely. Just as disease spreads when herd immunity falls below 90%, just as a barrel is soured by one badly bruised apple – so the whole of Scotland is impacted by the acute problems of the few.

Look closer still. Our collective response contains symptoms of low-grade damage – hesitation, poor self-esteem and chronic fear of making mistakes.

No matter how few are truly crippled by "the Scottish Effect" we all pay for it. In cash terms – of course – but in the more important matter of outlook too. Trust in the capacity of others, belief there is such a thing as society and our very identity as equality-loving Scots – all these precious social goods are threatened by the existence of no go zones, jobless, loan-shark patrolled, drug dependent ghettos, fear of others and the corrosive cynicism of the dispossessed. Aye right. We are the only nation who could turn a double positive into a negative and bestow that withering outlook on a leading Book Festival.

Above all, inequality eats away at leadership. Who knows what pace of change can reasonably be sustained when some can run marathons whilst others can hardly walk to the chippy? How can such an unevenly empowered group cross the road together when one person's uncertainty causes everyone else to falter? Blight on healthy plants doesn't arise by mistake or accident. It's the fairly predictable outcome of difficult climate, poor soil conditions, a lack of protection, shelter and nourishment. As it is in the orchard so it is in society.

Of course Scotland is not doing too badly.



Of course there have been successful Scots. Of course there always will be exceptions – but none as powerful as the rule. The expectation of exclusion is at the core of Scottish identity and the root of the “Scottish Effect”. Even though the children and great-grand-children of the dispossessed have wealth and material goods they don’t have the collective power to shape their local lives or feel Scotland is unequivocally their country and their responsibility to use well. Across much of Europe land and wealth was redistributed centuries back and democracy deepened in the process. It didn’t happen here. That single fact has allowed privilege and exclusion to thrive and normalise – even as Scots try to entrench their broadly social-democratic values at Holyrood.

The Scottish Establishment has used wealth, brass-neck, cultural confidence and long control of valuable assets to keep a grip on Scotland’s psyche, institutions and col-

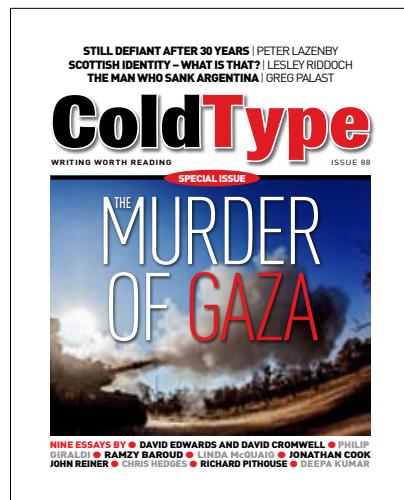
lective expectations. That grip weakened slightly with devolution and weakened further with the surprise election of two SNP governments. The move towards a more empowered, equal, community-focussed, Nordic-style society has begun. But the movement is hesitant and – ironically – divided by the all-consuming political battle over Scotland’s constitutional future.

The task for Scots, quite simply is to weed out old inequalities and associated ways of thinking to let Scotland blossom. This book tries to show that amongst ordinary Scots – far from the chattering classes and centres of establishment power – and against incredible odds, that process has already begun.

**CT**

*Lesley Riddoch is an awarding winning broadcaster and journalist who writes regularly for the Scotsman and Guardian, Her website is <http://lesleyriddoch.com>*

**The Scottish Establishment has used wealth, brass-neck, cultural confidence and long control of valuable assets to keep a grip on Scotland’s psyche, institutions and collective expectations**



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# 'Disgustingly biased'

David Edwards & David Cromwell on the dismal performance of corporate media during the latest Gaza massacres

**Despite this small number of military deaths compared to the Palestinian toll, it seems clear that the killing of the Israeli troops triggered the BBC live feed**

Soon after Malaysian Airlines MH17 crashed near Donetsk, Ukraine on July 18, killing 298 people, the BBC website quickly, and rightly, set up a 'LIVE' feed with rolling reports and commentary on the disaster. This was clearly an important and dramatic event involving horrific loss of life with serious political implications. The public would, of course, be searching for the latest news.

However, since July 8, ten days prior to the crash, Israeli armed forces had been bombarding the trapped civilian population of Gaza with airstrikes, drone strikes and naval shelling. As the massive Israeli assault ramped up on July 9, the World section of the BBC News website had this as its headline:

'Israel under renewed Hamas attack'

By July 18, around 300 people had been killed in Gaza, 80% of them civilians. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a key political issue of our time, one that was clearly developing by the minute after July 8. And yet at no point had the BBC set up a 'LIVE' feed with rolling news.

That finally changed on July 20 after so many days in which so many Palestinians had been killed. Why July 20? The answer appears to be found in the fourth entry of the live feed under the title 'Breaking News':

'Some 13 Israeli soldiers were killed overnight in Gaza, news agencies, quoting Israeli military sources, say. Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to address the nation shortly.'

Despite this small number of military deaths compared to the Palestinian toll, it seems clear that the killing of the Israeli troops triggered the BBC live feed. It focused intensely on these deaths, with entries of this kind:

'Ben White, writer tweets: Israel has lost more soldiers in a 3 day old ground offensive than it did during Cast Lead & Pillar of Defense combined (12).'

And: 'View to the Mid East, a writer in Ashdod, Israel tweets: One of the soldiers who was killed in Gaza tonight prays at the same synagogue I go to. Grew up in the same neighbourhood.'

The feed incorporated no less than five photographs from two funerals of the Israeli soldiers but none from the far more numerous Palestinian funerals (one picture showed Palestinian relatives collecting a body from a morgue), with these captions:

'Friends and relatives of Israeli Sergeant Adar Barsano mourn during his funeral at the military cemetery in the northern Israeli city of Nahariya.'

And: 'Sagit Greenberg, the wife of Israeli soldier Maj Amotz Greenberg, mourns during his funeral in the central town of Hod Hasharon.'

Obviously, Israeli suffering also merits compassion, but these military deaths were

overshadowed by a far higher loss of Palestinian lives, most of them civilian men, women and children. At the time of this writing, the toll stands at 746 Palestinians killed and 4,640 wounded. Israel has suffered 32 military and two civilian deaths. One foreign worker from Thailand has also been killed.

In the following days (and at time of writing) the live feed was cancelled; a period that has seen hundreds of Palestinian deaths and a handful of Israeli military deaths.

For some time on the morning of July 21, the sole Gaza content on the BBC News home page was 'Breaking News' of an 'Israeli soldier missing in Gaza'.

Remarkably, on the morning of July 23, when 18 Palestinians were killed, the BBC set up a live feed for the wrecked Italian cruise liner *Costa Concordia*, which showed the ship being towed to Genoa. There was no live feed for Gaza.

The BBC has supplied names, ages, pictures and emotive background stories of the Malaysian air crash victims while, with rare exceptions, Palestinian dead have been presented as nameless figures, briefly mentioned, then forgotten.

The level of BBC bias was emphasised by an article headline that placed inverted commas around the siege in Gaza, as if it were a matter for debate: "Palestinian PM says lift Gaza 'siege' as part of ceasefire". The BBC subsequently changed the title, but a tweet promoting the article with the original wording remains.

The BBC has also implied that 'Rockets fired from Gaza' are comparable to 'Gaza targets hit by Israel'. Readers are to understand that attempted attacks by unguided, low-tech rockets are comparable to actual bombings by state of the art bombs, missiles and shells. The BBC's source? 'Israel Defence Forces.'

On July 21, BBC News at Ten presenter Huw Edwards asked a colleague live on air:

'...the Israelis saying they'll carry on as long as necessary to stop the Hamas rocket attacks. Do you detect any signs at all that there's a hope of a coming together in the

next few days or weeks, or not?'

In other words, BBC News presented Hamas rocket attacks as the stumbling block to peace, exactly conforming to Israeli state propaganda.

In a report on the same edition of News at Ten, the BBC's world affairs editor, John Fidler-Simpson CBE, asserted that 'one reason why casualties on the two sides are so out of proportion' is because 'Israel has developed the world's most effective anti-missile defence'.

This suggested a more or less equal fight with Israeli simply better able to protect itself. Fidler-Simpson added:

'The Iron Dome system's ability to knock Hamas missiles out of the sky has been a remarkable achievement for Israel during this crisis. The success rate is quite phenomenal.'

Back in the real world, weapons experts Ted Postol of MIT and Richard Lloyd of Tesla Laboratory, argue that claims for Iron Dome are wildly exaggerated, estimating a success rate of less than 5 per cent. Peter Coy of BloombergBusinessweek comments:

'Lloyd e-mailed me a copy of a 28-page analysis that's the most detailed critique yet of the holes in the Iron Dome system – holes so big that, if he's right, would justify calling it Iron Sieve.'

BBC bias has also been typified by its downplaying, or complete blanking, of large-scale demonstrations in several UK cities protesting BBC coverage. As activist Jonathon Shafi noted of the BBC's lack of interest:

'It is misinformation of the worst, and it is an insult to journalism.'

After the four Palestinian Bakr boys, aged between 9 and 11, were killed by an Israeli shell, the *New York Times* headline on July 16 read:

'Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Center of Mideast Strife'

This worked well to obscure the truth that the boys had been killed while playing football on a beach. Artist Amir Schiby produced a wonderful, moving tribute to the Bakr boys.

**The level of BBC bias was emphasised by an article headline that placed inverted commas around the siege in Gaza, as if it were a matter for debate: "Palestinian PM says lift Gaza 'siege' as part of ceasefire"**

**Many expert commentators argue that the deeper cause behind the latest violence is in fact Israel's opposition to the Palestinian unity government, including Hamas, formed earlier this year**

Even indisputable evidence here and here that Israel had fired on hospitals in Gaza, major war crimes, brought little outrage from politicians and media. Jonathan Whittall, Head of Humanitarian Analysis at Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF), reminded the world:

'Our role is to provide medical care to war casualties and sick detainees, not to repeatedly treat the same patients between torture sessions.'

Despite the unequal battle and high civilian death toll, no high-profile advocates of the West's 'responsibility to protect' ('R2P') civilians in Iraq, Libya and Syria have been calling for 'intervention'.

We asked passionate 'R2Pers' like David Aaronovitch, Jonathan Freedland and Menzies Campbell if they felt 'we must do something'. They did not reply. Freedland commented in a BBC interview that the death toll was 'very lopsided' – a polite euphemism for a massacre that, according to Unicef, has claimed 10 children per day. E-International Relations website reports:

'While the conflict has generated near blanket international media coverage it has been strangely ignored by the three most prominent and vociferous organisations established to promote the idea of "The Responsibility to Protect", namely The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) and the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APCR2P)...

'Since the operation began these groups have published myriad tweets, posts and articles – on issues ranging from the rights of women, the treatment of refugees, mass atrocity cries and the provision of medical aid... Yet, coverage of the crisis in Gaza has been negligible.'

### **Who Starts The 'Cycle Of Violence'?**

The term 'cycle of violence' often occurs in corporate reporting of the Israel-Palestine conflict. But who starts the cycle spinning?

A study of news performance in 2001 by the Glasgow Media Group noted that Israelis 'were six times as likely to be presented as "retaliating" or in some way responding than were the Palestinians'.

The US media watchdog, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, observed that the current conflict 'is usually traced back to the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers on the West Bank. When their bodies were found on June 30, Israel "retaliated" by attacking Gaza. The July 2 killing of a Palestinian teenager, allegedly a revenge murder by Israeli extremists, was reported as further escalating the conflict.'

On the BBC's News at Ten (July 23), reporter Quentin Sommerville commented (at 14:31):

'The kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers, blamed on Hamas, sparked this conflict.'

The *Guardian* readers' editor, Chris Elliott – ostensibly the newspaper's watchdog on bias in language and presentation – echoed Israeli propaganda, describing Israel's current attack as a 'counter-offensive'.

NBC News correspondent Ayman Mohyeldin supplied a rare example of dissent:

'But even before the kidnapping of three Israeli-Jewish teenagers and killing of the Palestinian teenager last week, two Palestinians were killed back in May and didn't trigger the kind of international outcry and international outrage that the killing of the three Israeli teens have.'

Corporate media have generally not identified these deaths as initiating a 'cycle of violence'. According to human rights group B'Tselem, 568 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli security forces from January 2009 till the end of May 2014; 84 of those fatalities were children. Over the same time period, 38 Israelis were killed by Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Many expert commentators argue that the deeper cause behind the latest violence is in fact Israel's opposition to the Palestinian unity government, including Hamas, formed

earlier this year which has been recognised even by the US.

### **No Ceasefire – ‘It’s The Siege, Stupid’**

If Palestinians are blamed by corporate media for starting the violence, they are also blamed for refusing to end it. A *Guardian* article title read:

‘Pressure mounts on Hamas to accept ceasefire as Gaza death toll tops 300 – Hamas left isolated by its refusal to accept a truce as death toll rises and UN chief heads for the region to help broker peace’

Jerusalem correspondent Harriet Sherwood commented:

‘But with the Palestinian death toll rising over 300, it is the Hamas leadership that has come under increasing pressure from multiple international sources to accept an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

“The objective is to convince all the Palestinian factions to accept the ceasefire,” one western diplomat told the *Guardian*.’

But a cessation of the current violence would not mean an end to war and suffering for the Palestinians. Ali Abunimah of Electronic Intifada commented:

[T]he two Palestinian resistance groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad have set forth ten conditions for a ceasefire and ten-year truce with Israel.

‘They include an end to all armed hostilities, the end of the siege of Gaza, and the construction of internationally supervised air and seaports.’

Abunimah explained the rationale behind these conditions:

‘It’s the siege, stupid. Talk to virtually anyone in Gaza and they will tell you the same. The siege is living death, slowly crushing the life out of Gaza. It has to end.

‘This is a main reason why Hamas did not accede to the attempt by Israel, through its ally the Egyptian dictatorship, to impose a unilateral “ceasefire” about which Hamas says it was never even consulted, hearing about the initiative only through the media.’

Jerusalem-based journalist Mya Guarnieri

described what a return to the status quo actually means:

‘Israel strikes Gaza from time to time and kills Palestinian civilians there and in the West Bank without garnering much scrutiny from the international media and, by extension, the international community.’

In February 2013, Ben White commented:

‘Three months have passed since the ceasefire that brought an end to Israel’s eight-day attack on the Gaza Strip known as Operation “Pillar of Defence”... Since late November, Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip have averaged over one a day, every day. These include shootings by troops positioned along the border fence, attacks on fishermen working off the Gaza coast, and incursions by the Israeli army.’

These attacks are mentioned in passing, or ignored, by a corporate media system that is so clearly indifferent to the loss of Palestinian life. Israel-based journalist Jonathan Cook observed of the latest conflict:

‘It’s depressingly predictable that the corporate media have swallowed the line of Israel accepting the “ceasefire proposal” and Hamas rejecting it. What Hamas did was reject a US-Israeli diktat to sign away the rights of the people of Gaza to end a siege that cuts them off from the rest of the world.’

### **Corporate Filtering – ‘A Top-Down Intimidation Campaign’**

The bias in failing to report the brutalisation of a trapped, impoverished people under occupation is staggering. Many might wonder why journalists fail to speak out. But several journalists who have exposed Israeli actions, and media bias favouring Israel, have been punished.

Ayman Mohyeldin, the NBC News correspondent who witnessed the killing of the four Bakr boys, and whose reporting of the tragedy moved many readers around the world, was subsequently ‘told by NBC executives to leave Gaza immediately’. Glenn Greenwald reports that NBC executives claimed the decision was motivated by ‘security concerns’

**A cessation of the current violence would not mean an end to war and suffering for the Palestinians**

## THE MURDER OF GAZA / 1

**Biased US-UK journalism is empowering the Israeli government's effort to terrorise the Palestinian people into accepting gradual genocide as their land and resources are stolen**

as Israel prepared a ground invasion. But NBC then sent another correspondent, Richard Engel, into Gaza with an American producer. After a storm of protest on social media, NBC announced it had 'reversed its decision'. The broadcaster dissembled:

'As with any news team in conflict zones, deployments are constantly reassessed. We've carefully considered our deployment decisions and we will be sending Mohyeldin back to Gaza over the weekend.'

The day after Mohyeldin was pulled out, CNN correspondent Diana Magnay was removed from covering the conflict after she reported Israelis cheering the bombing of Gaza from a hillside overlooking the border. When the people cheering allegedly threatened to destroy Magnay's car 'if I say a word wrong', she described them on Twitter as 'scum'.

On July 21, journalist and MSNBC contributor Rula Jebreal said in an interview on MSNBC of MSNBC:

'We're ridiculous. We are disgustingly biased when it comes to this issue. Look how many [sic] air time Netanyahu and his folks have on air on a daily basis, Andrea Mitchell and others. I never see one Palestinian being interviewed on these same issues.'

The MSNBC interviewer responded: 'We have had Palestinian voices on our show.'

Jebreal replied: 'Maybe for 30 seconds, and then you have 25 minutes for Bibi Netanyahu...'

Max Blumenthal reported on AlterNet:

'Within hours, all of Jebreal's future bookings were cancelled and the renewal of her contract was off the table.'

Later that day, Jebreal tweeted:

'My forthcoming TV appearances have been cancelled! Is there a link between my expose and the cancellation?'

Jebreal commented:

'I couldn't stay silent after seeing the amount of airtime given to Israeli politicians versus Palestinians. They say we are balanced but their idea of balance is 90 percent Israeli guests and 10 percent Palestinians. This kind of media is what leads to the failing policies

that we see in Gaza.'

Jebreal said that in her two years as an MSNBC contributor, she had told her producers: "'we have a serious issue here". But everybody's intimidated by this pressure and if it's not direct then it becomes self-censorship'.

Blumenthal reported that an NBC producer, speaking anonymously, had confirmed the reality of 'a top-down intimidation campaign aimed at presenting an Israeli-centric view of the attack on the Gaza Strip'.

Pressure on the executives responsible for disciplining journalists is also intense. Jill Abramson, former executive editor of the *New York Times*, has said Washington often 'played the terrorist card' to get stories spiked:

'Sometimes the CIA or the director of national intelligence or the NSA or the White House will call about a story... You hit the brakes, you hear the arguments, and it's always a balancing act: the importance of the information to the public versus the claim of harming national security... Over time, the government too reflexively said to the Times, "you're going to have blood on your hands if you publish X" and because of the frequency of that, the government lost a little credibility... But you do listen and seriously worry... Editors are Americans too... We don't want to help terrorists'.

But editors should remember that they are human beings first, Americans second – to behave otherwise risks supporting their own government's terrorism and that of its allies.

For in truth, biased US-UK journalism is empowering the Israeli government's effort to terrorise the Palestinian people into accepting gradual genocide as their land and resources are stolen. As we have discussed here (see also Gideon Levy here), the hidden backstory is that this land grab can not be conducted under conditions of peace. It requires Perpetual War; a phoney, one-sided 'war' dominated by Israel's perennial trump card: high-tech military power supplied by that eternal 'peace broker', the United States.

**CT**

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**David Edwards and David Cromwell**  
*are co-editors of Medialens, the British media watchdog –*  
<http://medialens.org>

# Israel, right or wrong

But what's in it for America? asks **Philip Giraldi**

It is a familiar scenario. Israeli is killing hundreds of civilians, mostly women and children, and the Zionist propaganda machine is working overtime. The President of the United States reaffirms America's solemn pledge to protect Israel at all costs and justifies the carnage by stating that Israel has a right to defend itself. Secretary of State John Kerry repeats the message and the US House and Senate pass unanimously American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) drafted resolutions affirming the same.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lies repeatedly and the US media gives him a bully pulpit to spread his disinformation about what is occurring, including a propaganda cartoon explaining why he had to use artillery and bombs to level a residential district, killing nearly 100 civilians in what was described as a "heinous massacre."

The mainstream media obligingly toes the line, depicting something like a battle between equals pitting the Israeli Army (IDF) against Hamas militants, obfuscating the essential asymmetry of a conflict that has killed more than 1,000 Palestinians civilians.

A very large percentage of the commentators on television and radio as well the authors of mainstream print media opinion are American and Israeli Jews, to include a

piece by Michael Oren, former Israeli Ambassador to the US and current CNN "expert," entitled "Israel Must be Permitted to Crush Hamas" as well as the featured appearances by Prime Minister Netanyahu on national television.

Oren's call to crush Hamas is particularly ironic as it runs directly contrary to American interests. The US intelligence community believes that the group would likely be succeeded by something far more radical.

The media, Congress, and Netanyahu all also connive to ignore the deliberate targeting of civilians to include hospitals, schools and private homes by the IDF, producing massive infrastructure damage and increasing the numbers of dead and wounded.

The US media did not report how Israelis watching the bombing from their lawn chairs on a hill near Sderot were photographed cheering and applauding each time a target in Gaza exploded. They were also sharing popcorn and one described the event as "just good fun."

Also missing in the discussion is the damage that the conflict does to the United States, which is seen throughout the world as Israel's puppet, manifested most recently when Washington alone opposed and will presumably veto any United Nations inquiry into possible war crimes connected

**The US media did not report how Israelis watching the bombing from their lawn chairs on a hill near Sderot were photographed cheering and applauding each time a target in Gaza exploded**

**Washington has no obligation to protect the Netanyahu government in international fora nor is there any treaty obligation to defend Israel or anyone else outside the NATO alliance**

to the Gaza conflict.

American diplomats are supposed to support American interests while the Founding Fathers created an army and navy to defend the United States, not Israel, a fact that seems to have escaped the notice of many in the White House, Congress and in the media. In reality, Washington has no obligation to protect the Netanyahu government in international law nor is there any treaty obligation to defend Israel or anyone else outside the NATO alliance. Israel is neither an ally nor is its self-defined security a compelling US national interest if one excludes the drumbeat of the domestic lobby that protects it no matter how badly it behaves.

The sequence of events leading up to the current slaughter is clear, though Israel's friends pretend that it all started when the first homemade rocket landed inside Israel, justifying any subsequent steps necessary for "defense." But the Israel-Palestine problem truly began in 1948, when armed Jews deliberately terrorized and then drove more than 700,000 Palestinians from their homes.

It was exacerbated when in 1967 the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza began, leading to the creation and expansion of illegal settlements on Arab land.

The current cycle of violence, rooted in the denial of viable statehood for the Palestinian people, began in April when Israel deliberately torpedoed US brokered peace talks by accelerating settlement building and failing to comply with an agreement to release prisoners.

On May 15, Israeli soldiers shot dead two Palestinian teenagers, an event that was videoed. They were among the 26 Palestinians killed by Israelis since January, with no one being held accountable.

Four weeks later, three Israeli teenagers from Hebron were kidnapped and later discovered dead. Netanyahu, who knew that the three young men were already

dead and that the abduction had not been carried out by Hamas cynically used the kidnapping as a pretext to attack Hamas on the West Bank, blaming the group for the crime without producing one shred of evidence. An Arab teenager was subsequently burned to death by Jewish extremists and the boy's American citizen cousin was badly beaten by police when he joined a demonstration.

Netanyahu may or may not have cared who was killing or kidnapping whom on a micro level, but he knew a good opportunity when he saw one. He took advantage of the situation to launch a plan to destroy Hamas and *pari passu* the Palestinian unity government.

Hundreds of arrests were made, again without any evidence linking those detained with the kidnapping, and homes of suspects were demolished. When Hamas in Gaza eventually struck back with its homemade rockets, killing or injuring no one, Israel unleashed its modern army and air force on the largely unarmed and defenseless Palestinians.

Israel also has found allies in the usual places in the US media and political circles to help explain the ensuing massacre. Ayman Mohyeldin, the NBC News correspondent who personally witnessed and reported the killing by Israel of four Palestinian boys on a Gazan beach was ordered by NBC executives to leave Gaza immediately, presumably because he had strayed from the acceptable message, which is that the deaths of Palestinians is somehow their own fault. CNN also "reassigned" reporter Diana Magnay who tweeted regarding an Israeli mob that threatened her when she filmed their celebration of missile strikes in Gaza. She called her attackers "scum" and was quickly removed.

The far fewer deaths of Israelis in the conflict are, however, rather more celebrated than the mass high tech execution of Palestinians. American volunteers in the IDF are depicted as somehow doing their



patriotic duty, albeit in a foreign army. The *Washington Post* described how the “Death of two Americans in Israel brings conflict home.”

Both men identified in the article though born in the US had chosen to live in Israel, producing some pushback in the blog comments.

One noted that bearing arms for a foreign country that is not in NATO is illegal (and used to lead to automatic loss of citizenship) while another comment observed that if you are by choice fighting in a foreign army you are no longer really American. I might add that directly supporting Israel’s militarized colonization of Palestinian lands is against stated US government policy and does actual damage to American interests.

The Gazans are, to be sure, an easy target, crowded into a narrow strip of land with no place to go as they are controlled on all sides by Egypt and Israel.

Fleeing inhabitants cannot even turn to the sea which is controlled by the Israeli navy. A comprehensive ten year truce offer by Hamas has been rebuffed by Israel and the slaughter will presumably continue until Netanyahu decides to stop. The United Nations has suggested that what Israel is doing might fit the definition of a war crime, just as was the case back in 2009 for Operation Cast Lead, when more than 1,400 Gazans were killed and schools run by the UN were deliberately targeted, as has been the case also currently.

That the US is so tied to a rogue nation like Israel would be incomprehensible but for the action of what has been described as the Israel Lobby.

As Harvard Professor Stephen Walt puts it, “AIPAC is the only explanation for America’s morally bankrupt Israel policy.” Israel is in reality a place that most Americans would find unsympathetic. It is a corrupt theocracy that denies equal rights to Christians and Muslims, a fact that is conveniently overlooked by Congress and the

media. There is also a strong dose of racism and ethnocentrism in its political matrix, with broad popular support for either disenfranchising or expelling all non-Jews. Or even killing them, with crowds in Tel Aviv routinely chanting “Death to Arabs.”

An Israeli member of parliament Ayelet Shaked of the ultra-nationalist Jewish Home party has called all Palestinians terrorists, saying women should be especially targeted for killing during the ongoing Israeli assault on the besieged Gaza Strip because they give birth to “little snakes.” She explained “They have to die and their houses should be demolished so that they cannot bear any more terrorists,” adding “They are all our enemies and their blood should be on our hands. This also applies to the mothers of the dead terrorists.” A prominent Rabbi has also endorsed complete destruction of Gaza and genocide, as a “deterrent measure to exterminate the enemy.”

Perhaps most discouraging is the visceral hatred directed at American critics of Israeli policies that surfaces occasionally among that nation’s most zealous supporters.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, former Michael Jackson spiritual adviser and self-designated “America’s Rabbi,” has penned a piece entitled, “By Condemning Israel, Presbyterians Condemn Themselves.” He writes regarding the Presbyterian decision to divest from companies supporting the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, stating that “The rotting corpse of the Presbyterian Church suffered another nail in the coffin with its general convention vote on Friday to divest from companies doing business with Israel.”

Boteach, who has also become close to a number of prominent politicians, received no mainstream censure for this comments attacking a major Christian denomination in the vilest terms.

His article also plays fast and loose with the facts. He observes “In the wake of the

**A comprehensive ten year truce offer by Hamas has been rebuffed by Israel and the slaughter will presumably continue until Netanyahu decides to stop**

## THE MURDER OF GAZA / 2

**Boteach and his friends, most certainly to include the likes of multi billionaire casino magnate Sheldon Adelson of Las Vegas, have no dual loyalty at all**

Oslo Accords, in which Israel granted the PLO political autonomy in the West Bank, about 60,000 Americans were murdered in Israel.” Since Oslo in 1993 the actual figure for dead Americans, many of whom were Israeli dual nationals, is 53.

That the United States has provided political support for a monster like Benjamin Netanyahu is criminal but it is a tribute to the grip that Israel’s lobby has on America’s political class and media.


For starters, one might reasonably suggest that people like Boteach and the American volunteers including Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel who go to fight for Israel while eschewing any service in the US Army should perhaps move permanently to the country that they love most. The charge of dual loyalty which surfaces regularly regarding Israel’s most passionate Jewish supporters misses the point. Boteach and his

friends, most certainly to include the likes of multi billionaire casino magnate Sheldon Adelson of Las Vegas, have no dual loyalty at all.

Their only concern is for Israel and they stay in the United States to cash in and to make sure that the rest of the American people are coerced and propagandized sufficiently so as to guarantee that the US will remain Israel’s patsy. But more and more Americans are waking up to the fraud and the ongoing slaughter of another thousand or so Palestinians in Gaza virtually guarantees that there will be more questions about the relationship with Israel than answers. Eventually the truth will out. **CT**

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South Africa  
before the  
revolution

# Freedom's Children

Photographs by  
Duncan Mangham

ColdType

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# It is not just an Israeli war on Gaza

Benjamin Netanyahu is not the only leader culpable of Gaza's bloodbath; others in western capitals are also responsible, writes **Ramzy Baroud**

**T**o some, US secretary of state John Kerry may have appeared to be a genuine peacemaker as he floated around ideas during a Cairo visit on 25 July about a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian fighters in Gaza. But behind his measured diplomatic language, lies a truth not even America's top diplomat can easily hide. His country is very much involved in fighting this dirty war on Gaza which has killed over 1,050, injured thousands more, and destroyed much of an already poor, dilapidated space that was barely inhabitable to begin with.

US economic and military aid to Israel is measured annually in the billions, and the US government continues to be Israel's strongest and most ardent ally and political benefactor. In fact, the US-Israel "special relationship" is getting more "special" by the day even though Israel is sinking further into the abyss of a well-deserved isolation.

True, there are some, even in the justice for Palestinians camp, who speak of how exceptional and fair the Barack Obama Administration has been in comparison to its predecessors.

However, they neglect the fact that aside from a few particularly strong-worded statements, Obama has been a dedicated stalwart of Israel and copper bottoming its vision of its security by going as far as de-

fending Israel's 'Operation Protective Edge' war – the slaughter of thousands of innocent civilians in Gaza.

On 5 March, 2014, a Congressional bill – The United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act (H.R. 938, S. 462) – declared that Israel is a "major strategic partner of the United States."

The sweeping bill covered many programs from energy, to "research pilot programs" between Israel and the US Department of Homeland Security. What is most important to note is that Congress now requires additional reports that would update the government on the US' commitment to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME).

This is merely one of many bills and government initiatives that continue to give Israel a special undeserved status. But this military edge is used mostly to maintain Israel's illegal military occupation. Most of Israel's victims in its latest war on Gaza are civilians who are killed by US weapons. There is no escaping the fact that the US is a partner in the Israeli crimes in Gaza and the rest of Palestine.

Without a complete reversal of US attitude towards Israel, the US will continue to lack any credibility as a peacemaker or a mere ceasefire mediator.

But America's support for Israel is crossing new red lines. There are report-

**Obama has been a dedicated stalwart of Israel and copper bottoming its vision of its security by going as far as defending Israel's 'Operation Protective Edge' war**

### **The French government imposed a ban to prevent French society from showing its solidarity with the besieged and massacred Palestinians in Gaza**

edly over 1,000 US citizens fighting in the Israeli army according to reports that are now resurfacing due to the recent killing of two US-Israeli soldiers – Max Steinberg, 24, of California, and Nissim Sean Carmeli, 21, of Texas. Like the rest of the IDF soldiers killed in recent fighting, they were killed while invading parts of the besieged Gaza Strip. But the number must be an understatement since some of Israel's most ardent Jewish settlers are also American, and happen to be armed and dangerous. Although this is causing a bit of a media buzz, there is no political crisis. Instead, only condolences are offered to the families of the Americans fighting the genocidal war on Gaza.

The US is not alone in this. European governments display an incredible amount of hypocrisy as they continue to utilise doublespeak in their approach to Middle East conflicts in general, and the situation in Palestine in particular.

The pressure mounting from European civil society makes it a bit more challenging for EU governments to endow Israel with the same unconditional love and support as that bestowed upon it by the US. EU hypocrisy is too palpable even for clever politicians to hide.

### **Shameless Britain**

The British government is shamelessly on the Israeli side, even while entire families in Gaza are being pulverized by western weapons and military technology. Meanwhile, the French government imposed a ban to prevent French society from showing its solidarity with the besieged and massacred Palestinians in Gaza.

But why ban mere demonstrations of solidarity while France, the US and other Western governments are allowing their Jewish citizens to be enlisted in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) which is actively killing Palestinian civilians?

Shouldn't that be a much greater concern to the duplicitous French government

than some protesters chanting some slogans during a solidarity rally that may or may not be deemed anti-Semitic?

Indeed, not only are western governments providing Israel with arms, funds and political cover to sustain its occupation and war, but they are also contributing thousands of military experts and boots on the ground in order to fight a war in Gaza where war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed on an hourly basis.

Consider this: While British citizens fighting against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad are being detained and persecuted, British citizens who are fighting for Israel are not. The British government is turning a blind eye to what should be considered a criminal act.

Western hypocrisy on this is as profound as the phenomenon of westerners killing Palestinians, which some are now calling 'Israeli Jihadists'.

Belgium also stands accused of allowing such criminality. Although Belgian civil society is one of Palestine's strongest supporters, their government is cloaked with unmistakable dishonesty. Many Belgian citizens are also taking part in Israel's lethal wars in Gaza and military occupation of the occupied territory, with little or no protest from their government.

The recruitment of Belgians is mostly done through the same organisations that recruited thousands of foreign fighters for the IDF. Think of them as terrorist head-hunting organisations that operate in a perfectly legal environment.

Recently, Mayor of Antwerp, Bart De Wever, called on the Belgian government to cancel dual citizenship of 'Syria jihadis'. His call was made during a recent visit to a synagogue in Brussels after four people were shot by an alleged French-born citizen suspected of having spent time fighting in Syria.

The country's Minister of Justice Anemie Turtelboom took the initiative fur-

ther by calling on EU countries to block jihadists from going to Syria, suggesting the creation of a list of all known “Syria jihadists.”

But what about the number of Belgians who are fighting, killing and committing war crimes on behalf of Israel? Why is the Belgian government keeping silent about those in the Israeli army, with no statement yet issued, even after the killing of Belgian citizen Eytan Barak?

Not only is the Belgian government miserably failing to prevent Belgians from fighting in Gaza, but the mainstream media is also failing to report such events. Only alternative media seems interested in what should be a major story in Brussels.

The same questions apply to other western governments. The hyper-sensitive French government turned a blind eye when a French citizen was killed during the Gaza onslaught.

**Looking the other way**

While the Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported on the killing of staff Sgt. Jordan Bensemhoun, most of the French media and government have looked the other way. The very government that continues to make life difficult for African immigrants in France, sees no problem of its own immigrants taking part in foreign wars that are in violation of its own citizenship laws.

In fact, the French are now considering a six months ban on those travelling to Syria and Iraq, so as not to take any chances that some of them may be recruited in the ongoing strife there. As for travelling to Israel to join the IDF? Well, for Paris, that’s a whole different matter.

The list of participating countries is growing as is the number of those suspected war criminals fighting and killing in the name of Israel. This is not met with enough

civil society initiatives to bring criminals to justice for the sake of exposing the organizations that recruit them, the “support groups” that sustain them, and government silence and hypocrisy that tolerate the entire criminal enterprise.

Western involvement in the war on the Palestinian people is indeed going beyond the usual and known support of funds, military technology and economic aid, to actual participation in the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza. This is not a matter than can be addressed within the larger argument of Western double standards in Israel and Palestine, but an urgent issue that demands immediate attention.

By preventing those who leave their countries to kill Palestinians in Gaza, fewer civilians are likely to be murdered.

Legal cases should be brought before courts throughout western capitals to try known names of US-EU soldiers, and new lists should be composed of others who use dual citizenship status to further the suffering of the Palestinians so that legal action may immediately take place.

It is one thing to fail to stop war crimes from being committed, it is a whole other level of failure to defend, finance and take active part in carrying out these war crimes. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not the only leader culpable of Gaza’s bloodbath; others in western capitals should also be held to account.

*(Thanks to Laila Benallal for her help with the research for this article.)* **CT**

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**The French are now considering a six months ban on those travelling to Syria and Iraq, so as not to take any chances that some of them may be recruited in the ongoing strife there**



THE MURDER OF GAZA / 4

# How Stephen Harper betrayed Canada

**Linda McQuaig** discusses the moral disconnect at the heart of the Canadian Government's stance on Israel's attack on Gaza

*Photos: Pro-Gaza demo in Toronto, by Tony Sutton*

Certain minimal standards are expected of a national leader in what is known as the 'civilized world'.

One of those standards would seem to be that, when massive numbers of defenceless civilians are being killed, a national leader should call for the killing to stop.

Questions about responsibility, blame,



Thousands of protesters express anger and sorrow outside the US consulate in the heart of Toronto

punishment, repercussions, etc., can always follow. But surely the first order of business – the one with moral urgency – is to halt the killing of innocent people.

So it's quite extraordinary, as well as appalling, that Canada's prime minister Stephen Harper has steadfastly declined to join other world leaders in calling for a halt to Israel's bombing of Gaza, which has killed more than 200 people and left more than 1,500 injured.

Instead, Harper has asserted that "Canada is unequivocally behind Israel" – a ringing endorsement uttered not long after Israeli bombs ripped through a house in Gaza, killing five children and thirteen other members of an extended family, and also destroyed a centre for the disabled, killing two.

The message from Harper seemed to be: Let the killing continue!

Of course, Harper is correct in saying Is-

rael has a right to defend itself. And the militant group Hamas is criminally responsible for launching hundreds of rockets into Israel in the past week with the intent of causing death and destruction, killing one Israeli at the time of writing.

But the lopsided nature of the death toll (200:1) highlights the enormous power imbalance between the two sides – one equipped with home-made rockets and no air defence, and the other fielding the most sophisticated laser-guided missiles and a state-of-the-art defence system, backed up by nuclear weapons.

Harper insists that Israel goes to great lengths to avoid killing civilians. But Paul Heinbecker, a former Canadian ambassador, noted on CBC TV's Power and Politics that international law prohibits Israel from, for instance, attacking a military target if it is located in a densely populated building.

**Paul Heinbecker, a former Canadian ambassador, noted on CBC TV's Power and Politics that international law prohibits Israel from, for instance, attacking a military target if it is located in a densely populated building**



Demonstrators chant slogans outside the US consulate in Toronto during one of several protests against US and Canadian government support for the latest Israeli attacks on Gaza.

**Officially, according to the website, Canada does not condone Israel's military occupation and supports UN resolution 242 calling for Israel to withdraw to its 1967 borders**

Harper maintains that Israel notifies residents of its impending attacks, but Heinbecker points out that there is essentially nowhere to flee to safety in Gaza – a tiny, poverty-stricken strip of land where some 1.8 million people live crowded together, trapped on all sides.

What is striking about Harper's intensely one-sided approach is the way he resolutely avoids dealing with the central fact of this decades-old conflict: that millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have been living under Israeli military occupation for more than forty-five years, and that Israel has effectively annexed what used to be their land, building settlements on it that now accommodate more than 600,000 Israelis.

Harper's refusal to take any of this into consideration flies in the face of Canada's long-standing position on the Mideast con-

flict – a position that still appears on the Canadian government's website.

Officially, according to the website, Canada does not condone Israel's military occupation and supports UN resolution 242 calling for Israel to withdraw to its 1967 borders. While you'd never know it from listening to Harper, Canada still "supports the creation of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic and territorially contiguous Palestinian state."

Canada's official website further states that "Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention" and that the "settlements also constitute a serious obstacle to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace."

Of course, these positions, updated on the website last January, were developed under earlier Canadian governments that recog-





**The peaceful march in Toronto against the latest Israeli attacks on Gaza was preceded by clashes between supporters of Israel and protestors at Queen’s Park, home of the Ontario legislature.**

nized the land issue as integral to a peaceful solution.

The Harper government hasn’t yet had the nerve to renounce these positions, apparently fearful of drawing fresh attention to its abandonment of Canada’s tradition of support for the UN and our role as peacekeepers – traditions many Canadians still revere.

By keeping his focus exclusively on the current bombing (and only on the bombing by Hamas), Harper helps divert attention from the real story behind the conflict: the relentless takeover of Palestinian land.

In statements that have received little notice (at least here in Canada), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently indicated that Israel has no intention of ever giving up control of the West Bank, where 2.5 million Palestinians live. In other words, the military occupation will continue. Israel’s of-

ficial “withdrawal” from Gaza in 2005 has resulted in tighter, not looser, Israeli military control over the territory.

Canadians are often asked to imagine the plight of Israelis, who must endure indiscriminate rocket attacks. But we’re rarely asked to imagine the plight of Palestinians, who not only endure far more devastating attacks with no place to hide, but also watch as their land is slowly but inexorably taken over – with the apparent support of seemingly fair-minded people, like the Canadians.

Of course, most ordinary Canadians know little about all this. They’re caught up in their daily lives, and trust their government to represent their values and speak for them in world matters.

Under the Harper government, that trust couldn’t be more flagrantly abused. **CT**

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**Linda McQuaig** is the winner of a Canadian National Newspaper Award, who has been a reporter for the *Globe and Mail*, and columnist for the *National Post* and *Toronto Star*. She was the *New Democrat* candidate in Toronto Centre in 2013.

# Stakes rise for Israel as rockets reach airport

Temporary air blockade of Israel reveals deeper issues to its citizens, writes **Jonathan Cook**

**In Israel, air links to the rest of the world are considered not just a luxury but also an almost existential issue**

Israel's effective loss of its only international airport for a couple of days last week – and the cloud of uncertainty that continues to hang over its operation in the future – has deeply unsettled Israelis.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) banned American carriers from flying to Israel, a move soon followed by many European airlines, after a rocket from Gaza landed close to Ben Gurion airport, near Tel Aviv, on July 22. The FAA and the airlines seemed especially jittery after the downing of a Malaysian passenger jet over war-torn Ukraine a few days earlier, killing 298.

The suspension of flights was overturned barely 48 hours later, following great pressure from Israel. Nonetheless, it was a warning to Israelis that, now Palestinian factions in Gaza have longer-range rockets, there is a potentially more serious, collective price to be paid for Israel's repeated military assaults on the tiny enclave.

In Israel, a country that views itself, in the words of a former prime minister, as a “villa in the jungle,” air links to the rest of the world are considered not just a luxury but also an almost existential issue.

Some fourteen million passengers pass through the airport every year, many of them visiting, or being visited by, Jewish relatives abroad. Israel's economy also benefits from a large number of tourists.

I felt the anxiety personally, worrying

about how deeply disappointed my two young children would be if my wife could not find a way home from Chicago last week.

Others drew grander parallels. One leading analyst even compared Israel's situation to the blockade of Berlin by Russia at the start of the Cold War.

It would be satisfying to write that Israelis, in experiencing a very temporary and partial air blockade, gained a little insight into the far worse conditions for Palestinians in Gaza, who have spent the past eight years under an Israeli-imposed siege, denied most contact with the outside world.

The coastal enclave of Gaza is penned in on all sides by fences, walls and watch-towers. It has no airport or seaport because Israel destroyed them long ago. Fishermen are barely allowed to get further than shallow waters before being fired on by Israeli gunboats, while the air above Gaza is the domain of Israel's surveillance and weaponized drones.

The central demand Hamas has made for an acceptable ceasefire is that the siege ends and Gaza be allowed to reestablish sea and air links to the world.

But most Israelis have appeared to make no connection between their own experience and the gnawing frustration, fear and fury of the people of Gaza at their long imprisonment. Instead, they have focused on

their resentment on Hamas and the foreign airlines for inflicting on them a small inconvenience.

The brief suspension of flights also exposed deeper issues concerning Israel's current attack on Gaza, dubbed Operation Protective Edge – issues usually skirted by the war rhetoric of Israel and Hamas.

The first concerned Israel's much-vaunted right to "self-defense" against the rockets from Gaza, a principle backed even by US President Barack Obama.

Harvard law professor and vocal Israel supporter Alan Dershowitz set out a retrospective logic for Israel's attack, saying: "Every country in the world would do everything in its power to keep open its airports, the lifelines to its economic viability."

True enough. But Dershowitz's argument hardly justified Operation Protective Edge. Given that Israel has been enforcing a siege on Gaza for at least the past eight years – in fact, it destroyed the airport in 2001 – it was an eloquent reminder that Hamas had a responsibility to "do everything in its power," including attacking Israel, to restore Gaza's own economic lifelines.

Inadvertently, Dershowitz was exposing not only the hypocrisy of Israel's supporters, but also reminding us that international law gives the Palestinians alone a right of self-defense – against Israel's belligerent occupation and the siege of Gaza.

Then there was the issue of Israel's strenuous efforts to end the FAA's suspension of flights. Its activities were hard to square with the image it portrayed of a country under a barrage of Hamas rockets, terrorizing its population.

Last week, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Ron Prosor, echoed the official refrain, that Hamas was hell-bent on Israel's "destruction." He added: "There is no country in the world that would tolerate such an assault on its citizens."

The casualty figures told a different story. Before Israel invaded Gaza, the Palestinian death toll stood in the hundreds, while Is-

rael had only one fatality.

But if Israelis really were under such a serious threat, surely it would be unwise, even reckless, for international airlines to be risking their passengers' lives by flying into an airport next to Tel Aviv, well within the range of rockets.

Confronted with this argument, Israeli officials suddenly and dramatically changed their tune. Even as most other carriers cancelled flights, all of Israel's own airlines, such as El Al, continued to fly in and out of Ben Gurion as normal.

Mark Regev, spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, tried to reassure the airlines: "Our airport is safe; our airport is secure."

But which was it? Were most Israelis in danger from the rockets, despite the low casualty figures, or was most of Israel safe? Regev tried to deflect attention from this conundrum with a quite astounding statement.

Israel has developed a rocket interception system – mostly paid for by the US – called Iron Dome that it says is protecting population centers. Regev argued that Israel had tracked the rocket near the airport and allowed it through because "we saw that it wasn't going to hit inside the airport."

Though few bothered to check, a quick look at a map showed how improbable that account was. The path of a rocket from Gaza to Yehud, the neighborhood that was hit, would have passed over part of the airport, through its air space, close to aircraft taking off and landing. The idea that Israel was not concerned about this happening, given Israel's heightened security fears about Ben Gurion, is simply inconceivable.

So it must indicate something else. There were a few possibilities.

It may be, as several missile interception experts both in Israel and abroad have suggested, that Iron Dome's true success rate is far lower than claimed. It could be as low as 5 percent, says Ted Postol, of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Some have branded

**Israel has developed a rocket interception system – mostly paid for by the US – called Iron Dome that it says is protecting population center**

**The reality is that an Iron Dome interception missile is far more dangerous to a plane – if it locks onto it by mistake – than the rockets fired from Gaza**

it “iron sieve.”

Or it may be that Israel does not have either enough Iron Dome launchers or enough interception missiles – which cost as much as 50,000 US dollars a time – to intercept all the rockets being fired as Palestinian factions get better at reaching population centers.

Or, as one analyst with close ties to the Israeli military claimed, it may be that the Iron Dome crew was “ordered to be extra cautious about interceptions near the airport that could interfere with the planes flying above it.” While this seemed a plausible explanation, it did not address the FAA’s concerns about safety. It simply reframed them.

The reality is that an Iron Dome interception missile is far more dangerous to a plane – if it locks onto it by mistake – than the rockets fired from Gaza, which means that if Hamas fires rockets at Ben Gurion, it creates a double threat – from the rockets and from the interception missiles.

Whatever the correct explanation, Israel’s airport patently isn’t safe during these confrontations – and is likely to get less safe in the future. Hamas rockets can reach Ben Gurion and, though not exactly precise, need only to hit in the vicinity to shut Israel’s gateway to the world.

So why isn’t Hamas barraging Ben Gurion airport in the hope that one or more rockets get past Iron Dome, or that Israel mistakenly shoots down a plane with an interception missile? That way, it could give Israel a taste of what a real blockade feels like.

Some Israeli analysts claim that is precisely what Hamas has been doing, but Iron Dome has saved the day.

But another possibility, suggested by the

limitations noted above, is that – whatever its rhetoric – Hamas has mostly avoided targeting Ben Gurion, accepting, however reluctantly, that there are certain unwritten rules in these now almost ritual engagements.

Cynically, Israel prefers in Gaza to “mow the lawn,” as the Israeli military term it: remind Hamas and ordinary Palestinians who is boss through intermittent bouts of extreme violence. The goal is to weaken Hamas without actually overthrowing it and thereby leave the enclave lawless and unmanageable.

Hamas, by contrast, wants to inflict enough psychological and economic damage on Israel to encourage Israel to change policy, but not so much that Israel will feel compelled either to topple the Islamic group or to reoccupy Gaza.

The rocket on Ben Gurion airport risked changing Israel’s calculations. Is it possible that Hamas decided to increase the pressure on Israel – with a kind of warning shot – in growing frustration at Israel’s mounting attacks on its core infrastructure, such as its tunnel network in Gaza, and Israel’s refusal to engage in meaningful ceasefire negotiations?

Whatever the truth, that rocket suggests the stakes in the conflict are only getting higher for Israel. **CT**

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**Jonathan Cook** won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are “*Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*” (Pluto Press) and “*Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair*” (Zed Books). His website is [www.jonathan-cook.net](http://www.jonathan-cook.net)

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# With a heavy heart over Gaza

**John Reiner** describes the flood of memories of his 2009 trip to Jenin provoked by Israel's latest assault on Gaza

**D**uring the past several weeks, I've spent a lot of time thinking about the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. I visited the camp back in 2009 during my trip to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). I vividly remember with a broken heart how camp leaders described the psychological damage done to the children following the 2002 Israeli massacre at the camp.

We were told about children who refused or were unable to sleep for fear of Israeli helicopters bombing them in their homes while they slept. We were told about 14- and 15-year-olds wetting themselves in school because of how traumatized they were. I've thought about all this as I've seen the horrors of the current Israeli onslaught on Gaza unfold day after day.

What's happening in Gaza by most accounts is worse than previous Israeli assaults there in 2006, 2009 and 2012. An all-too-common and utterly heart-wrenching theme is the reporting of entire families being virtually wiped out. The numbers – eight, nine, 12, 18, 25 members, including 17 children, of individual families – are almost beyond one's ability to comprehend.

This latest episode of Israeli war crimes, like the previous ones, is being played out in front of a global audience. The atrocities being committed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are being documented by

doctors and human rights groups who are witnesses to the slaughter. Videos showing the death and destruction of Gazans of all ages are viewed by millions and are leading to mass actions of protest by people all over the world who are making their voices heard.

Whether it was a young man looking for relatives who was repeatedly shot and killed by an Israeli sniper or four young boys playing soccer on a deserted beach who were targeted and blown up by an Israeli gunboat, the theme remains constant – the lives of Palestinians, regardless of age, are worthless to the Israeli forces being sent to destroy them.

In order to fully understand what is occurring, it is necessary to put this onslaught, this massacre, into the larger context of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation, and in the case of Gaza, the illegal siege and blockade. During my trip to the OPT, a trip that did not include Gaza, we saw firsthand the impact of the occupation on virtually every aspect of Palestinian life.

We saw the true face of the occupation in Hebron in an old woman who, despite living across the street from the cemetery where her loved ones were buried, is forced to walk more than a mile to pay her respects because the street that separates her home from the cemetery is a Jews-only road.

**The atrocities being committed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are being documented by doctors and human rights groups who are witnesses to the slaughter**

**Just as the occupation dominates life for Palestinians in the West Bank, the siege and blockade choke the life out of the people of Gaza**

We experienced it walking through the streets in Hebron below a wire netting that is necessary to block the rocks and feces thrown down on them from the Jews who live above them. Sadly, the netting was not nearly as effective at blocking the verbal abuse that was hurled down upon the Palestinian citizens of Hebron.

We saw it in the faces of the old and the young in the Dheisheh refugee camp located just south of Bethlehem. There, like in Jenin, we met people over the age of 60 who had spent their entire lives inside the camp as refugees. We saw it in the faces of people stranded for hours at a time at the various checkpoints that dot the West Bank. These checkpoints are designed to make the lives of Palestinians even more impossible.

At the infamous Qalandiya checkpoint, we met students who told us they were forbidden from even bringing pencils through. This was confirmed by students at Birzeit University, near Ramallah, who told us that it was impossible for them to make it to class on time due to the checkpoints. Many were therefore forced to spend what little money they had renting rooms with many other fellow students as it was the only way they could be close enough to school to make it to class on time.

At Birzeit, we were told of the horrors of administrative detention, a policy that arrests Palestinians without charge or trial for periods up to six months. What makes it worse is that when the six-month period is up, Israeli authorities can simply renew the six-month period, and the cycle continues on and on, with Palestinians, including many students, spending years in detention without ever even being charged with a crime.

Just as the occupation dominates life for Palestinians in the West Bank, the siege and blockade choke the life out of the people of Gaza. It is for this reason that the inhabitants of Gaza, despite suffering constant bombardment and slaughter from

Israel, continue to support the resistance, regardless of whether or not they are supporters of Hamas. The consistent message from the people of Gaza has remained defiant, and that message is that as long as the siege stands, the resistance must continue.

Their demands have always been the same, and that is for the crippling siege to be lifted so that the people of Gaza can have access to food and water, medicine and medical supplies, and other necessities that they have been denied for years on end. Palestinians in Gaza have access to water for just three hours every three days and have power for between only four and eight hours a day.

The siege must be lifted so that they can have the freedom of movement to escape what has been accurately described as the world's largest open air prison. For far too long, the besieged of Gaza have been denied the most basic of human rights, suffering what many describe as a slow and calculated death at the hands of Israel. If the conflict ends with Gaza still under siege as it has with the previous assaults, then nothing will change, and it will simply be a matter of time, perhaps another year or two, before the next assault by the occupying Israeli military forces takes place.

As I write this, more than half of Gaza has been destroyed by the current Israeli assault. Due to the blockade that severely restricts the importation of building and construction materials, many structures destroyed during Operation Cast Lead more than five-and-a-half years ago have yet to be rebuilt.

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I don't pay much attention to conspiracy theories. The things we already have documented evidence of are more than enough to terrify us, yet throughout this entire nightmare, the Israeli government has covered up the truth about what led to this latest assault on Palestine. The cover-up surrounding the abduction and tragic murder of three settlers has been a crime in and

of itself.

What we do know is that Israeli intelligence forces knew that the three Israeli teens had been killed within the first day of their abduction. Yet, they carried out the charade of trying to rescue them with a military engagement called Operation Brother's Keeper. What followed was an 11-day rampage through the West Bank that saw the killing of at least five Palestinians as well as the arbitrary arrest of more than 500 Palestinians, including virtually every Hamas leader in the West Bank.

In addition, the IDF engaged in a massive campaign that saw them loot, pillage and destroy countless Palestinian homes – all this being done while their leaders, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Economics Minister Naftali Bennett, constantly spewed the most disgusting rhetoric, thereby inciting the violence that followed.

Ayelet Shaked, a member of Bennett's ultra-right Jewish Home Party in the Israeli Knesset, recently referred to Palestinian children as "little snakes" and said that every Palestinian was an "enemy combatant." Sadly, the vile sentiments expressed by the political leaders of Israel seem to reflect the sentiments of a majority of their constituents. Their call for Palestinian blood was answered by the shocking kidnapping and murder of 17-year-old Mohammad Abu Khdeir, who was burned alive on the morning of July 2 while he was on his way to the local mosque for morning prayers.

Finally, after more than a month of claiming that Hamas was responsible for the kidnapping but without providing any evidence to support this claim, a BBC reporter has revealed that Israeli police spokesperson Mickey Rosenfeld told him that the kidnappers were a "lone cell" that was not operating under orders from the Hamas leadership. Rosenfeld also said that "if kidnapping had been ordered by Hamas leadership, they'd have known about it in advance," according to the reporter.

This is a direct contradiction of what the Israeli establishment has said – for example, Netanyahu asserted, "Hamas is responsible and Hamas will pay." Yet, the damage was already done, and the justification Israel sought by waving the war flag around the deaths of three illegal settlers was achieved. For the past three weeks, the people of Gaza have been massacred by an occupying force hell-bent on inflicting as much death and destruction as possible.

Events like this – and the apartheid conditions that Palestinians are forced to live under – have many on the Israeli left increasingly fearful that the state of Israel is more and more resembling Nazi Germany during the 1930s. This opinion, which many Palestinians and their supporters have held for years now, is even expressed by some who survived the Nazi Holocaust.

Reports of bands of thugs beating Arabs and leftists opposed to the occupation while chanting "Death to Arabs, death to leftists" and "Throw all Arabs in the gas chamber" leaves me with an ominous chill. On my visit to the OPT, it was easy to see why these comparisons are drawn. We witnessed Jewish-only roads and special license plates and IDs for Palestinians. Even Palestinian citizens of Israel are denied many of the basic rights that Jews enjoy, and now they are forced to take loyalty oaths to a government that has systematically denied them of their basic rights for more than 65 years. Added to this is the continuous construction of illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian land and the destruction of Palestinian homes and land at an ever-increasing pace.

This latest slaughter has allowed us to see another parallel with recent history, specifically the sham cease-fire agreement concocted between Israel and the anti-Hamas Egyptian government that came to power through a coup. Two weeks ago, they proposed a deal that would put an end to this latest round of killing, but

**This latest slaughter has allowed us to see another parallel with recent history, specifically the sham ceasefire agreement concocted between Israel and the anti-Hamas Egyptian government that came to power through a coup**

## THE MURDER OF GAZA / 6

**When it was only Palestinians dying, mostly civilians, there was not a peep about the need for a ceasefire coming from anyone in Washington**

which would leave in place the siege and blockade of Gaza and provide absolutely no relief to its 1.8 million inhabitants.

They did this without consulting Hamas, knowing full well they could never accept but giving Israel political cover to justify more air strikes and a ground invasion, thus intensifying the wholesale slaughter of Gaza. This deadly charade is reminiscent of the 2000 Camp David Summit when all the blame for failing to come up with an agreement was placed at the feet of Palestinian National Authority President Yasser Arafat.

US President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak knew that Arafat could not accept the terms of the Camp David agreement, which would have forced massive concessions on the part of the Palestinians but demanded virtually nothing of the Israelis. Yet both leaders placed all the blame for the summit's failure at his feet. Clearly, this has been a recurring theme for as long as the "peace process" has existed.

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So now we are once again witnessing the widespread destruction of the Gaza Strip and its inhabitants. Sadly, the only language coming out of Washington is the same as it always has been: "Israel has the right to defend itself." Israel continues to enjoy a free pass from its greatest enablers – allowing it to kill and destroy with impunity. It is only now, when a small number of Israeli soldiers have been killed, that we hear President Obama say that we must have a ceasefire.

When it was only Palestinians dying, mostly civilians, there was not a peep about the need for a ceasefire coming from anyone in Washington. With the number of dead in Gaza now more than 1,300, including more than 220 children, and climbing steadily each day as Israel continues its assault, an end to the killing is of course needed. Yet, what is needed even more than that is a long overdue accounting and

reckoning of the crimes committed by the state of Israel and its chief benefactor, the United States of America.

Israel constantly boasts of its technical superiority when it comes to the precision of its weapons. It has long claimed that its "smart weapons" possess pinpoint accuracy. If indeed that is the case, then they have committed atrocities worthy of the most despicable of war criminals. The IDF has targeted and killed people undergoing surgery when the hospitals they were in were shelled. They have killed people in schools, hospitals, mosques, sports stadiums, markets, media centers, rehabilitation centers and other medical facilities, including those for the handicapped and disabled. Ambulance drivers and EMS workers have been targeted as well as being prevented from retrieving the dead and wounded leading to more senseless deaths.

An unimaginably despicable example of their pinpoint accuracy occurred July 24, when the IDF bombed a school in Beit Hanoun being used as a United Nations shelter, killing 16 and wounding more than 200. While Netanyahu has consistently blamed Hamas for using Palestinians as human shields, this worn-out argument has never been backed up by any evidence and has in fact been repeatedly refuted by one report after another. What has been verified, however, is the IDF's use of Palestinians, including children, as human shields [3]. This policy, which they have employed for many years, was recently used during the Shejaiya massacre that saw the killing of 72 Palestinians.

Netanyahu had the unmitigated temerity recently to say that he actually cared about the safety of the people of Gaza, imploring them to heed the warnings of the IDF when they were told to evacuate. The question the people of Gaza have for him is, "Where, Mr. Prime Minister, should we evacuate to?" Where is it safe to go when hospitals, clinics, schools, mosques and homes are targeted? The wounded cannot



even find refuge. Gaza, even under the best of circumstances, is a shoebox. There is nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. There is no safe haven for the besieged of Gaza.

All we ever hear from our politicians is, “Israel has the right to defend itself...Israel has the right to defend itself,” and “No country could be expected to live like this.” This is of course unless that country is Palestine. According to virtually every major American political leader beginning with President Obama, regardless of whether they’re the most ardent conservative Republican, such as Sen. Ted Cruz, or the most liberal “progressive” Democrat, such as Sen. Elizabeth Warren, there is no distinction when it comes to Israel.

The failure of any politician in this country to hold Israel accountable for crimes committed against Palestine is what allows them to continue to exist as the world’s last remaining colonial-settler state.

The outrageous influence exercised on US political leaders by AIPAC and other pro-Israeli organizations is a great place to look for an answer to the question as to why the US is so endlessly supportive of the racist and apartheid polices practiced by Israel.

The goal of such groups and their supporters is to relentlessly portray Palestinians as “terrorists” or “religious extrem-

ists.” The effectiveness of the strategy was impressed upon me when I told people of my plans to visit the West Bank just before the first anniversary of Operation Cast Lead. Many people expressed shock that I would be going to such a “dangerous” place and asked if I was scared that I would be killed by a terrorist or suicide bomber.

It was my proud duty to inform them that the only threat we faced during our stay was from the Israelis, whether it was from a member of the IDF pointing a high-powered rifle at us at a checkpoint or a suspicious bureaucrat at the airport interrogating us as to why we had come to Israel.

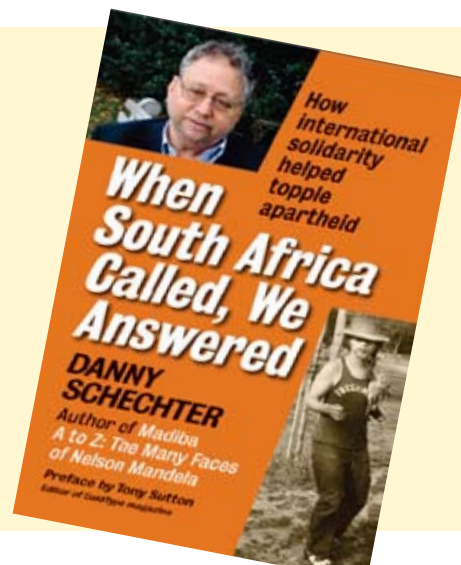
The people we met in Palestine simply desired to live peaceful lives, free from occupation. The level of kindness and humanity we were shown was something I know none of us will ever forget. Having the opportunity to meet people who have had their lands confiscated, their orchards of olive trees destroyed, some of them hundreds of years old, their water stolen, their houses demolished, and their relatives arrested and even killed while they still talk of an unquenchable desire for peace and freedom will always serve as an inspiration to all of us dedicated to the continued fight for Palestinian freedom and justice. **CT**

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*This essay was published by Socialist Worker at <http://socialistworker.org>*

**The failure of any politician in this country to hold Israel accountable for crimes committed against Palestine is what allows them to continue to exist as the world’s last remaining colonial-settler state**

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# Palestinians have a right to self defence

**Chris Hedges** says Gaza is justified in taking action against Israeli attacks

**No world body, including the United Nations, appears willing or able to pressure Israel through sanctions to conform to the norms of international law**

If Israel insists, as the Bosnian Serbs did in Sarajevo, on using the weapons of industrial warfare against a helpless civilian population then that population has an inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The international community will have to either act to immediately halt Israeli attacks and lift the blockade of Gaza or acknowledge the right of the Palestinians to use weapons to defend themselves.

No nation, including any in the Muslim world, appears willing to intervene to protect the Palestinians. No world body, including the United Nations, appears willing or able to pressure Israel through sanctions to conform to the norms of international law. And the longer we in the world community fail to act, the worse the spiral of violence will become.

Israel does not have the right to drop 1,000-pound iron fragmentation bombs on Gaza. It does not have the right to pound Gaza with heavy artillery and with shells lobbed from gunboats. It does not have the right to send in mechanized ground units or to target hospitals, schools and mosques, along with Gaza's water and electrical systems. It does not have the right to displace over 100,000 people from their homes. The entire occupation, under which Israel has nearly complete control of the sea, the air and the borders of Gaza, is illegal.

Violence, even when employed in self-defense, is a curse. It empowers the ruthless and punishes the innocent. It leaves in its aftermath horrific emotional and physical scars. But, as I learned in Sarajevo during the 1990s Bosnian War, when forces bent on your annihilation attack you relentlessly, and when no one comes to your aid, you must aid yourself. When Sarajevo was being hit with 2,000 shells a day and under heavy sniper fire in the summer of 1995 no one among the suffering Bosnians spoke to me about wanting to mount nonviolent resistance. No one among them saw the UN-imposed arms embargo against the Bosnian government as rational, given the rain of sniper fire and the 90-millimeter tank rounds and 155-millimeter howitzer shells that were exploding day and night in the city. The Bosnians were reduced, like the Palestinians in Gaza, to smuggling in light weapons through clandestine tunnels. Their enemies, the Serbs – like the Israelis in the current conflict – were constantly trying to blow up tunnels. The Bosnian forces in Sarajevo, with their meager weapons, desperately attempted to hold the trench lines that circled the city. And it is much the same in Gaza. It was only repeated NATO airstrikes in the fall of 1995 that prevented the Bosnian-held areas from being overrun by advancing Serbian forces. The Palestinians cannot count on a similar intervention.

The number of dead in Gaza resulting from the Israeli assault has topped 650, and about 80 percent have been civilians. As I write this, the number of wounded Palestinians is over 4,000 and a substantial fraction of these victims are children. At what point do the numbers of dead and wounded justify self-defense? 5,000? 10,000? 20,000? At what point do Palestinians have the elemental right to protect their families and their homes?

Article 51 does not answer these specific questions, but the International Court of Justice does in the case of *Nicaragua v. United States*. The court ruled in that case that a state must endure an armed attack before it can resort to self-defense. The definition of an armed attack, in addition to being “action by regular armed forces across an international border,” includes sending or sponsoring armed bands, mercenaries or irregulars that commit acts of force against another state. The court held that any state under attack must first request outside assistance before undertaking armed self-defense. According to UN Charter Article 51, a state’s right to self-defense ends when the Security Council meets the terms of the article by “tak[ing] the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.”

The failure of the international community to respond has left the Palestinians with no choice. The United States, since Israel’s establishment in 1948, has vetoed in the UN Security Council more than 40 resolutions that sought to curb Israel’s lust for occupation and violence against the Palestinians. And it has ignored the few successful resolutions aimed at safeguarding Palestinian rights, such as Security Council Resolution 465, passed in 1980.

Resolution 465 stated that the “Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 is applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem.” The resolution went on to warn Israel that “all measures taken by Is-

rael to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, or any part thereof, have no legal validity and that Israel’s policy and practices of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and also constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.”

Israel, as an occupying power, is in direct violation of Article III of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. This convention lays out the minimum standards for the protection of civilians in a conflict that is not international in scope. Article 3(1) states that those who take no active role in hostilities must be treated humanely, without discrimination, regardless of racial, social, religious or economic distinctions. The article prohibits certain acts commonly carried out against noncombatants in regions of armed conflict, including murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture. It prohibits the taking of hostages as well as sentences given without adequate due process of law. Article 3(2) mandates care for the sick and wounded.

Israel has not only violated the tenets of Article III but has amply fulfilled the conditions of an aggressor state as defined by Article 51. But for Israel, as for the United States, international law holds little importance. The US ignored the verdict of the international court in *Nicaragua v. United States* and, along with Israel, does not accept the jurisdiction of the tribunal. It does not matter how many Palestinians are killed or wounded, how many Palestinian homes are demolished, how dire the poverty becomes in Gaza or the West Bank, how many years Gaza is under a blockade or how many settlements go up on Palestinian territory.

**At what point do the numbers of dead and wounded justify self-defense? 5,000? 10,000? 20,000? At what point do Palestinians have the elemental right to protect their families and their homes?**

## THE MURDER OF GAZA / 7

**America funds and abets these crimes with \$3.1 billion a year in military aid to Israel. We are responsible for the slaughter**

Israel, with our protection, can act with impunity.

The unanimous US Senate vote in support of the Israeli attacks on Gaza, the media's slavish parroting of Israeli propaganda and the Obama administration's mindless repetition of pro-Israeli clichés have turned us into cheerleaders for Israeli war crimes. We fund and abet these crimes with \$3.1 billion a year in military aid to Israel. We are responsible for the slaughter. No one in the establishment, including our most liberal senator, Bernie Sanders, dares defy the Israel lobby. And since we refuse to act to make peace and justice possible we should not wonder why the Palestinians carry out armed resistance.

The Palestinians will reject, as long as possible, any cease-fire that does not include a lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza. They

have lost hope that foreign governments will save them. They know their fate rests in their own hands. The revolt in Gaza is an act of solidarity with the world outside its walls. It is an attempt to assert in the face of overwhelming odds and barbaric conditions the humanity and agency of the Palestinian people. There is little in life that Palestinians can choose, but they can choose how to die. And many Palestinians, especially young men trapped in overcrowded hovels where they have no work and little dignity, will risk immediate death to defy the slow, humiliating death of occupation. **CT**

*Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, writes a regular column for Truthdig every Monday. Hedges' most recent book, written with Joe Sacco, is "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt"*

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# Gaza's future is everyone's concern

**Richard Pithouse** explains why we are all obligated to be in solidarity with the people of Gaza

*Every time a man has contributed to the victory of the dignity of the spirit, every time a man has said no to an attempt to subjugate his fellows, I have felt solidarity with his act. – Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, 1952*

The ruthless assault on Gaza has sometimes been presented in South Africa's media, and on occasion in some solidarity efforts too, as an issue that is solely of concern to Muslim people. It is true that in recent years state politics in both Palestine and Israel has taken on a more religious inflection.

There has also been a growth in popular movements in both Palestine and Israel that frame the conflict in religious terms. Moreover there is a historical religious dimension to the origins of this conflict in so far as the long persecution of the Jews in Europe, which is the root cause of Zionism as an armed colonial project, cannot be divorced from a murderous European intolerance, that, for a thousand years, framed itself as Christian. Europe, long imagined as a Christian space, displaced its historic moral debt to the Jews of Europe onto the Palestinians.

But this conflict began as a colonial occupation. It did not start as a religious war and has never been reducible to the question of religion.

Some Palestinians are Christian, many are secular and Palestinian resistance to Israeli oppression has often been organised on the basis of nationalism or left wing ideas.

Edward Said, one of the most compelling advocates of the Palestinian cause, was born into a Christian family. And while leading Christian figures, including Desmond Tutu, have taken a clear position in support of justice for the Palestinian people it is also true that, from the United States to Uganda, many of the most impassioned defenders of the Israeli state are right-wing Christians.

In Israel, in South Africa and around the world many Jewish people, religious and secular, have taken a clear position against the Israeli state and in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. You cannot deduce a person's religion from where they stand in this conflict nor can you deduce their position on this conflict from their religion.

Moreover in many parts of the world, like Ireland or South Africa, popular solidarity with the Palestinian struggle is generally rooted in a shared history of colonial oppression rather than shared religious convictions.

But although not all Palestinians are Muslim and not all Jews, or Christians, support the oppression of Palestinians by the state of Israel, this conflict does have

**In many parts of the world, like Ireland or South Africa, popular solidarity with the Palestinian struggle is generally rooted in a shared history of colonial oppression rather than shared religious convictions**

**One result of the construction of Islam as the new enemy of the West is that Palestinians are presented as irrational, without regard for the sanctity of human life and as part of a lower form of culture**

an inescapable contemporary religious dimension resulting from the fact that, since the latter years of the Cold War, American imperialism has actively sought to politicise Islam. This was first undertaken in order to cultivate an ally in opposition to the Soviet Union.

After the Cold War the politicisation of Islam was used to manufacture a new enemy that could legitimate American attempts to control the world's oil. Among other crimes this led to the devastation of Iraq in the name of human rights and freedom – a crime for which the butchers in Washington will never have to account to any court because global power relations are such that white and Western power continues to be equated with reason, modernity, virtue and civilization even when it engages in mass murder for the purpose of wholesale theft.

One result of the construction of Islam as the new enemy of the West is that Palestinians are presented, from the *Jerusalem Post* to the *New York Times*, as irrational, without regard for the sanctity of human life and as part of a lower form of culture that is a threat to what is assumed to be the enlightened, democratic and, in every respect, superior culture of Western civilization.

This means that there is a degree to which Muslim people, around the world, have a particular stake in contesting the way in which a set of pejorative ideas about Islam are mobilised to dehumanise Palestinians. But this does not mean that the conflict in and around Palestine can be reduced to one of religious identity.

Even when religious identities are mobilised in support of political objectives, a process that is particularly easy in this part of the world given its place in the history and imagination of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, we are still not dealing, at the ethical level, with a conflict between two or three religions as monolithic blocks.

On the contrary there are always acute

ethical conflicts within religions. All of the major world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism – have enabled profoundly ethical orientations to the world and they all also carry entirely perverse currents that all decent people, irrespective of the accidents of their birth and their own religious choices, must oppose.

The particular stake that Muslim people have in opposing the demonization of Islam is not unique. After all women have a particular stake in opposing sexism, black people have a particular stake in opposing anti-black racism and gay people have a particular stake in opposing homophobia.

But just as this does not let men, white people or straight people off the proverbial hook when it comes to the necessity to oppose these systems of oppression people who are not Muslim have a moral obligation to be in solidarity with all Palestinians as people, and, also, with Palestinian Muslims who are oppressed, in part, as Muslims.

The assault on Gaza is, like the devastation of the Congo, or the ongoing disaster in Iraq, everyone's concern. In the particular case of Gaza the way in which Islamophobia is used to legitimate oppression is also everyone's concern. It is also true that the way in which Islam is sometimes misused to legitimate oppression, as in the Iraqi cities of Mosul, Fallujah and Tikrit at the moment, is everyone's concern.

In 1940 the Nazis forced more than 400,000 Jewish people into a tiny corner of Warsaw that became known as the Warsaw Ghetto. More than half of these people were sent to the Treblinka death factory in 1942. In 1943 the residents of the ghetto began a campaign of armed resistance against the Nazis.

They held out, in a heroic struggle, for three months before the Nazis burnt and blew up the ghetto, building by building, murdering everyone they could find.

In 2002 Mark Edelman, who was a Dep-

uty Commander of the Jewish Military Organization in the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, wrote an open letter to the leaders and soldiers of all the militant groups in Palestine. He critiqued their methods but, nonetheless, addressed the Palestinian militants as militants, and, by implication, endorsed their struggle as a struggle for justice.

A few months ago Chavka Fulman-Raban, one of the last survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto, gave a speech at the Ghetto-Fighters' House Northern Israel in which she declared that:

“All of my nearest, most beloved comrades fought from the rooftops, in the fires, from the bunkers. Most of them perished. I hurts me that I can no longer remember all their names. We memorialize only a

few. But in my heart I am not parted from them, from the forgotten. ...

Continue the rebellion. A different rebellion of the here and now against evil, even the evil befalling our own and only beloved country. Rebel against racism and violence and hatred of those who are different. Against inequality, economic gaps, poverty, greed and corruption. Rebel against the Occupation.”

This is what an ethical orientation to the world looks like. We are all – irrespective of the accidents of our birth or our religious choices – obligated to be in solidarity with the people of Gaza.

**CT**

*Richard Pithouse teaches politics at Rhodes University, at Grahamstown, South Africa*

**We are all – irrespective of the accidents of our birth or our religious choices – obligated to be in solidarity with the people of Gaza**

**BENDIB'S WORLD**

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org



# Telegenically dead

Deepa Kumar on Israel's crumbling media war

**Among the various shifts it suggests, the manual notes that it is important to distinguish between the Palestinian people and Hamas**

Israeli propaganda has hit a new low. While the world was still trying to come to terms with the mass deaths in Shejaiya, Benjamin Netanyahu went on CNN to state that Hamas uses the “telegenically dead” to further “their cause.” He added that for Hamas: “The more the dead, the better.” Even while Netanyahu followed the propaganda script, which is to first show sympathy and express remorse, by reducing dead Palestinians to a photo-op he showed how his own mind works.

There is a standard script for how to deal with Palestinian casualties. After Israel killed four boys on the Gaza beach on July 16th, the US establishment media fell in line behind Israel's PR framework: acknowledge the tragedy, but blame Hamas. This is exactly what Israeli spokesperson Mark Regev said on Channel 4 News when grilled by the anchor Jon Snow. It is also how the US State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki responded using the same word-for-word talking points.

This framework, developed in 2009, can be found in the Israel Project's 2009 Global Language Dictionary. The Orwellian manual provides a detailed outline on how to “communicate effectively in support of Israel.”

One of its first instructions is that pro-Israeli propagandists need to show empathy. The manual insists that they should “show empathy for BOTH sides” (caps in original)

as a way of gaining credibility and trust. To make sure that the point is understood, the manual repeats again (in bold and underlined this time) the instruction “use Empathy” – the suggestion being that empathy is an important tool to be used in the propaganda war.

When innocent Palestinian children and women are killed, the first response should be to show empathy; the next is to reframe the issue stating that Israel is not to blame and that it is only defending itself and further that it only wants peace. Even when it is raining death and destruction on Palestinians, the manual is clear: “Remind people – again and again – that Israel wants peace.”

Developed after the 2008 Gaza war, when Americans began to show greater sympathy for Palestinians, this propaganda manual tries to address some of the shortcomings during Operation Cast Lead. Among the various shifts it suggests, the manual notes that it is important to distinguish between the Palestinian people and Hamas. Ayman Moyheldin, one of the few international reporters who covered Cast Lead, noted that Israel sought to “portray everyone in Gaza as a Hamas sympathizer, as a terrorist sympathizer” as a way to justify its indiscriminate killing.

The 2009 manual counters this strategy stating that while American's “get” that “Hamas is a terrorist organization. . .if it



sounds like you are attacking the Palestinian people. . .you will lose support.” It carefully emphasizes again: “Right now, many Americans sympathize with the plight of the Palestinians, and that sympathy will increase if you fail to differentiate between the people from their leaders.”

In other words, in order to decrease sympathy for the Palestinian people new tactics were needed to augment older ones.

Israeli propaganda has a long history. In 1982 the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was met with international condemnation. In particular, the massacre of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila damaged its public image.

Israel then instituted a permanent PR establishment that would work to cultivate good media coverage in the US. The Hasbara project involved training Israeli diplomats and press officers on how to speak in ways that ensured favorable media coverage.

The media watchdog group, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) was formed to monitor and respond to “unfair” media coverage of Israel.

But pro-Israeli coverage isn’t simply the product of good talking points rather it stems from the “special relationship” between the US and Israel and their mutual interests in the Middle East. It is not a coincidence that Jen Psaki would use the same language as Mark Regev. Or that John Kerry would echo Benjamin Netanyahu.

The US political elite, the elite in Israel, and the owners of the corporate media share a set of common economic and political interests that ensures that pro-Israeli propaganda dominates in the establishment media. Should journalists and media organizations break from the script, various pro-Israeli groups, such as CAMERA, generate flak and bring enough pressure to bear on editors and reporters that they are brought back into line.

As Glenn Greenwald noted recently, media figures and executives are more “petri-

fied” of covering Israel than any other issue. Jon Stewart comically made the same point in his segment “We Need to Talk about Israel.”

The end result is that news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict follows predictable pro-Israeli patterns that are outlined in an educational video produced by media scholar Sut Jhally called Peace, Propaganda, and the Promised Land: US Media and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

But something new has been happening in the establishment media, particularly since the July 16th tragedy. Ayman Moyheldin now working for NBC witnessed and covered Israel’s cold blooded murder of four young Palestinian boys playing soccer on the beach. Moyheldin’s coverage was gut wrenching but it was carried by NBC nevertheless.

However, NBC immediately recalled Moyheldin, giving no explanation for why its best journalist on this topic (Moyheldin has covered Gaza before, speaks Arabic, and has a good understanding of Middle East politics) might be pulled out of Gaza.

This is standard establishment media protocol. But what happened next is anything but standard.

Following Glenn Greenwald’s article on this at the Intercept, large numbers of people, primarily through social media, held NBC’s feet to the fire. In contrast to standard patterns where the only pressure comes from well-funded pro-Israeli groups, this time ordinary people who are reeling from the Palestinian death toll organized their dissent.

The result was that Moyheldin was reinstated. He tweeted: “Thanks for all the support. I’m returning to #Gaza to report. Proud of NBC’s continued commitment to cover #Palestinian side of the story.

Similar outrage at ABC’s Diane Sawyer who misidentified the devastation and suffering of Palestinians as Israeli, prompted a rare apology from the slavishly pro-Israel corporate media.

**The US political elite, the elite in Israel, and the owners of the corporate media share a set of common economic and political interests that ensures that pro-Israeli propaganda dominates in the establishment media**

## THE MURDER OF GAZA /

**“Children, maybe four feet tall, dressed in summer clothes, running from an explosion, don’t fit the description of Hamas fighters, either”**

The dynamic at work is as follows: First, independent media have played a crucial role in countering Israeli propaganda and offering alternative accounts. Second, social media have provided a forum from which independent journalism, as well as first hand reports from Palestinian people in Gaza, are circulated. Third, in these spaces Israel is losing the propaganda war, despite its vast resources of trolls and misinformation experts. Fourth, grassroots activists using social media have been able to bring pressure to bear on the establishment media. Fifth, this climate has enabled establishment journalists on the ground to be more forthcoming about the horrors of what is happening in Gaza.

Thus, Tyler Hicks, a photojournalist for the *New York Times*, who also witnessed the Israeli attack on the beach was allowed to contribute a story in the Times about his experience. Calling the lie to Israel’s claim that it only bombs Hamas targets, he wrote: “A small metal shack with no electricity or running water on a jetty in the blazing seaside sun does not seem like the kind of place frequented by Hamas militants, the Israel Defense Forces’ intended targets. Children, maybe four feet tall, dressed in summer clothes, running from an explosion, don’t fit the description of Hamas fighters, either.”

At the beach when this tragedy occurred, Hicks asked: “If children are being killed, what is there to protect me, or anyone else?”

Ben Wedeman, CNN’s veteran foreign correspondent, found out first hand that nothing can protect journalists. He was hit in the head by an Israeli rubber bullet. Following this, he filed a report of a family in Gaza who were evacuating their neighborhood in anticipation of an Israeli attack. The scream of horror and panic of a little girl hearing a missile strike close to her location filled the screens of CNN viewers.

For the first time, perhaps, Americans are witnessing the suffering of Palestinian people in the establishment press. Even

while the framework of “Blame Hamas” dominates mainstream media coverage, the humanity of Palestinian people is cracking through the decades long, well established façade of pro-Israeli propaganda.

And how can it not? When the actual experience of journalists contradicts the propaganda narrative, if they have a heart or a brain, they cannot help but see Zionist propaganda for what it is. This is possibly why Israel kept out foreign journalists during the 2008 Cast Lead operation.

Another journalist, CNN’s Diana Magnay, hearing the cheers of Israeli’s as Palestinians were being bombarded, and somewhat horrified by it said spontaneously on the air – “it is really astonishing, macabre and an awful thing really to watch this display of fire in the air.” As a trained journalist, she seems to have self-censored and substituted the words “fire in the air” for what she actually thought about the people cheering on: “scum,” the word she would later tweet.

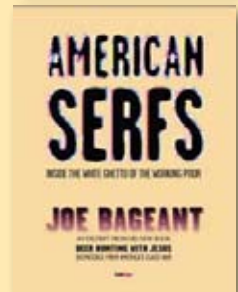
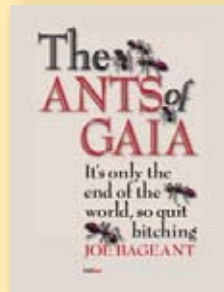
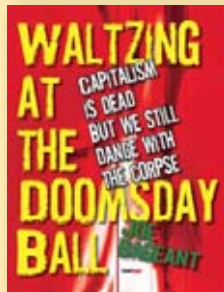
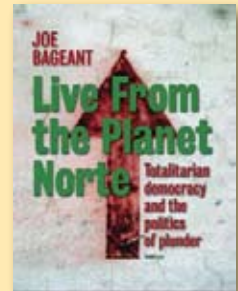
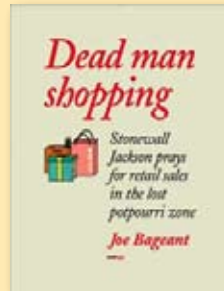
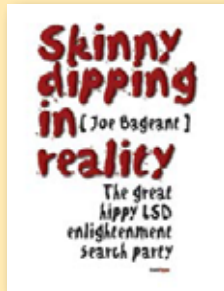
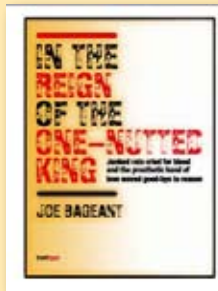
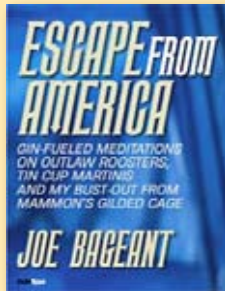
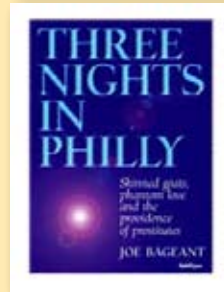
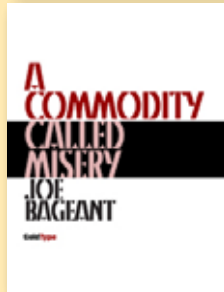
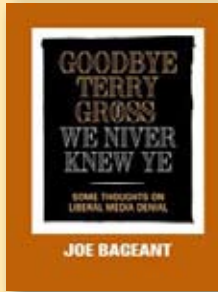
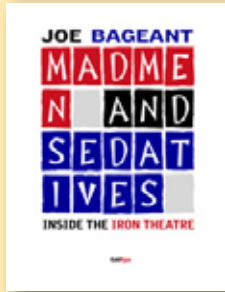
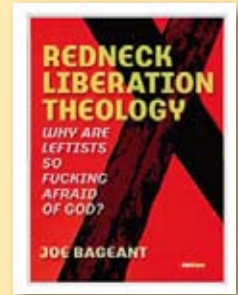
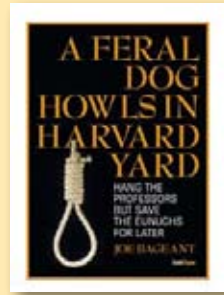
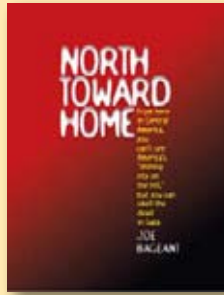
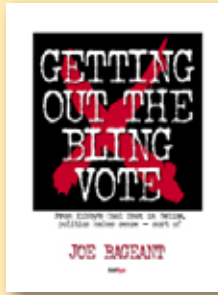
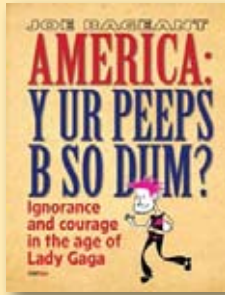
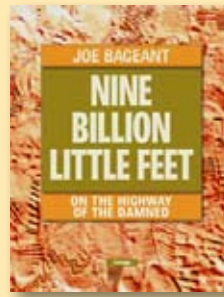
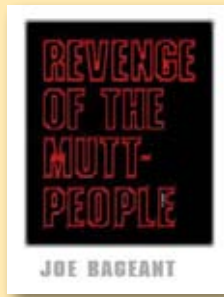
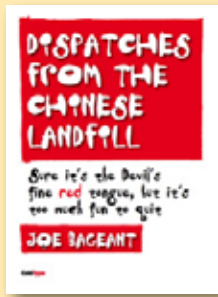
Magnay wrote: “Israelis on hill above Sderot cheer as bombs land on #gaza; threaten to ‘destroy our car if I say one word wrong.’ Scum.

Despite the serious intimidation faced by journalists, in this case to bomb Magnay’s car if she got even “a word wrong,” such pressure seems to be working less and less. While Magnay was called away from Gaza by CNN, a vigilant social media sphere combined with mass protests around the world has created a climate where if media institutions are to retain their credibility they have to at least appear to be balanced.

This is the opening that Palestinian rights activists and supporters need to harness in order to reframe the debate. While our side lacks lobby groups, media watchdog outfits, paid trolls, disinformation experts, and the vast financial resources of the Israeli side, we do have one thing going for us – the truth. **CT**

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*Deepa Kumar is an associate professor of media studies at Rutgers University.*



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<http://coldtype.net/joe.html>

# Crime (Israel) and Punishment (Russia)

**Pepe Escobar** wonders why the West has ignored Israel's war crimes while imposing sanctions on Russia

**Israel gets away with unlawful premeditated mass murder of civilians, while Russia gets framed for a (smaller-scale) airborne mass murder of civilians**

*The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining it ...*

*A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledgehammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic – George Orwell, 1984*

So Obama, Merkel, Cameron, Hollande and Italian Premier Matteo Renzi – let's call them the Fab Five – get on a video conference call to muster their courage and “increase pressure” asking for a ceasefire in Gaza. Later in the day, Israel's Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu delivers his answer, in plain language: he remains dead set on achieving his version of a Final Solution to Gaza. [1] With or without “pressure”.

So what's left for the Fab Five after having their illustrious Western collective behinds solemnly kicked? They decide to dump Gaza and instead sanction Russia – again! How brilliant is that as an exit strategy?

Spectacular non-entity Tony Blinken, who doubles as deputy national security adviser to Barack Obama, was keen to stress to Western corporate media that the unruly

Eurotrash mob is now “determined to act”. No, not against Israel because of Gaza; against Russia because of Ukraine. Such a lovely Orwellian symmetry: the extended Two Minutes Hate from Israel towards Gazans morphs into the extended Two Minutes Hate from the “West” towards Russia, mirroring the extended Two Minutes Hate from Kiev towards Eastern Ukrainians.

Not even Hollywood could come up with such a plot; Israel gets away with unlawful premeditated mass murder of civilians, while Russia gets framed for a (smaller-scale) airborne mass murder of civilians that has all the makings of being set up by the Kiev vassals of Russia's Western “partners”.

Sanctions, sanctions, sanctions is the one and only official Obama administration “policy” on Russia. On top of the next European Union sanctions, coming soon, the US will be piling up – what else – more sanctions. After all, Washington is so “concerned” that Moscow will sooner or later invade Ukraine; that would certainly, and finally, answer all those In God We Trust prayers.

## **Where we stand now**

Let's follow the facts. Washington from the get-go said it was Russian President Vladimir Putin's missile that downed MH17. They swore they had evidence. Like in “We

know. Trust us”. The historical record for the past 60 years at least shows they cannot be trusted. There was never any evidence. Just spin.

Moscow, via the Defense Ministry, presented hard evidence. And called for an unbiased international investigation. Washington ignored it all – the call and the hard evidence.

The US Navy, crammed with state-of-the-art missile defense radars, has been in the Black Sea for weeks now. As much as the Russians, they have tracked every particle flying over Ukraine. The NSA goes for signals intelligence; the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency goes for phenomena in the imagery realm; the Defense Intelligence Agency adds Humint; there's the CIA; and there's the all-seeing, all-knowing Director of National Intelligence. How come all this trillion-dollar Full Spectrum Dominance apparatus cannot come up with a single, conclusive piece of evidence?

The only risible “evidence” presented so far pictures the acronym salad of US intel agencies spending their time reading blogs and Twittering. As in the State Department head in Kiev twittering satellite imagery that the *New York Times* parroted “proved” Russia is shelling Ukraine from across the border. The proverbial “senior US officials” even had to tersely admit on the record they have no proof whatsoever about “Putin's missile”. If they had, NATO would be ready to flip burgers in Red Square.

Based on the wealth of info now in the open, the top probability of what caused the MH17 tragedy was an R-60M air-to-air missile shot from a Ukrainian Su-25 – and not a BUK (there's also the possibility of a double down; first an R-60M and then a BUK). The R-60M is very fast, with an ideal engagement distance of up to five kilometers. That's how far the Su-25 detected by the Russians (they showed the graphics) was from MH17.

SBU – Ukrainian intel – for its part con-

fiscated the recordings of Kiev control tower talking to MH17. That would certainly explain why MH17 was overflying a war zone (Malaysian Airlines revealed they were forced to). Hefty bets can be made the recordings are now being “doctored”.

Then there are the black boxes, which will not be decoded by the Malaysians or by the Dutch, but by the Brits – acting under Washington's orders. As The Saker blogger summed up the view of top Russian specialists, “the Brits will now let the NSA falsify the data and that falsification will be coordinated with the SBU in Kiev which will eventually release the recordings who will fully ‘confirm’ the ‘authenticity’ of the NSA-doctored recordings from the UK.” To make it more palatable, and erase suspicions about Anglo-American foul play, the Dutch will announce it. Everyone should be forewarned.

NATO heads, for their part, are droolin'. Kiev's forces/militias will hold “joint exercises” with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Ukraine in slightly over a month from now, on September 1; red alert applies, because this is when Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said the slow motion ethnic cleansing of Donbass will be finished.

As for the R2P (“responsibility to protect”) angle, it sounds quite improbable. True, Moscow can always say that unless the slow motion ethnic cleansing of Donbass stops they will recognize the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics. In that case, Moscow would be replaying Abkhazia and South Ossetia; a de facto R2P backed by military muscle.

Under international law – which Washington never respects, by the way – this is not the same as “invading” Ukraine. The frankly scary Samantha Power, the US Ambassador to the United Nations, would obviously freak out – but that's a dose of her own medicine. It would indeed be comparable to what the Americans are doing to the benefit of those Salafi-jihadis in Syria;

**How come all this trillion-dollar Full Spectrum Dominance apparatus cannot come up with a single, conclusive piece of evidence?**

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## POWER & HYPOCRISY

**Khodorkovsky was found guilty not only by the Russian judicial system but also by the European Court of Human Rights**

and better yet, to what the US did in Kosovo.

### **The \$50billion vultures**

And now, on top of sanctions, Moscow also has to contend with a massive US\$50 billion theft attempt. The International Arbitration Court in The Hague found that the Kremlin's pursuit of Yukos and its main shareholder, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a decade ago was politically motivated. Moscow can't appeal – but it will pursue all legal avenues for trying to get this ruling “set aside”.

Well, it's The Hague's decision itself that is political. Khodorkovsky was found guilty not only by the Russian judicial system but also by the European Court of Human Rights. Yukos and Menotep shareholders were and remain a bunch of oligarch gangsters – to put it mildly.

So here's the Empire of Chaos once again in action, manipulating a Dutch court after literally stealing Germany's gold and fining France for selling warships to Russia. In this case though, the “West” has more investments in Russia than the Russian government in the West. Payback could be a bitch – as in Moscow, for instance, freezing all US and EU energy investments especially in the new ultra-profitable frontier, the Arctic oil fields. Western Big Oil will never allow this to happen.

This could go on forever. The bottom

line: the Russian state simply won't allow itself to be robbed by a dodgy ruling on behalf of a bunch of oligarchs. In parallel, a case can be made that not only the Return of the Living (Neo-Con) Dead but also substantial sections of the deep state in Washington DC and environs – as well as “Western” plutocracy – want to provoke some sort of NATO war against Russia, sooner rather than later.

And in another parallel line, Moscow rumor has it that the Kremlin finds this protracted post-Yukos battle just an afterthought compared to the economic war about to convulse Europe and eventually pit Europe against Russia: exactly what the Empire of Chaos is praying – and working – for. “Two Minute” Hate? Talk about hours, days, weeks, and years. **CT**

### **Note:**

1. Netanyahu: *We're prepared for an extended operation in Gaza*, *The Jerusalem Post*, July 28, 2014.

.....  
**Pepe Escobar** is the author of “*Globalistan: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War*” (Nimble Books, 2007), “*Red Zone Blues: a snapshot of Baghdad during the surge*” (Nimble Books, 2007), and “*Obama does Globalistan*: (Nimble Books, 2009). This article first appeared at <http://www.atimes.com>

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# Delusions of grandeur

**William Blum** looks at recent statements from American leaders and finds that their views are not shared by the rest of the world

**U**S Secretary of State John Kerry, July 8, 2014: “In my travels as secretary of state, I have seen as never before the thirst for American leadership in the world.”

President Barack Obama, May 28, 2014: “Here’s my bottom line, America must always lead on the world stage. If we don’t, no one else will.”

Nicholas Burns, former US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, May 8, 2014: “Where is American power and leadership when the world needs it most?”

Mitt Romney, Republican Party candidate for President, September 13, 2012:

“The world needs American leadership. The Middle East needs American leadership and I intend to be a president that provides the leadership that America respects and keep us admired throughout the world.”

Paul Ryan, Congressman, Republican Party candidate for Vice President, September 12, 2012: “We need to be reminded that the world needs American leadership.”

John McCain, Senator, September 9, 2012: “The situation in Syria and elsewhere ‘cries out for American leadership.’”

Hillary Clinton, September 8, 2010: “Let me say it clearly: The United States can, must, and will lead in this new century. Indeed, the complexities and connections of today’s world have yielded a new American Moment – a moment when our global lead-

ership is essential, even if we must often lead in new ways.”

Senator Barack Obama, April 23, 2007: “In the words of President Franklin Roosevelt, we lead the world in battling immediate evils and promoting the ultimate good. I still believe that America is the last, best hope of Earth.”

Gallup poll, 2013: Question asked: “Which country do you think is the greatest threat to peace in the world today?”

Replies:

United States 24%

Pakistan 8%

China 6%

Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, North Korea, each 5%

India, Iraq, Japan, each 4%

Syria 3%

Russia 2%

Australia, Germany, Palestinian territories, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Korea, UK, each 1%

**The question is not what pacifism has achieved throughout history, but what has war achieved?**

Remark made to a pacifist: “If only everyone else would live in the way you recommend, I would gladly live that way as well – but not until everyone else does.”

The Pacifist’s reply: “Why then, sir, you would be the last man on earth to do good.

**“Let me say it clearly: The United States can, must, and will lead in this new century. Indeed, the complexities and connections of today’s world have yielded a new American Moment . . .” – Hillary Clinton**

**After the communists came to power in China in 1949, the United States opted for a strong Japan safely ensconced in the anti-communist camp. For pacifism, it's been downhill ever since**

I would rather be one of the first.”

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, 1947, words long cherished by a large majority of the Japanese people:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

“In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

This statement is probably unique amongst the world's constitutions.

But on July 1, 2014 the government of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, without changing a word of Article 9, announced a “reinterpretation” of it to allow for military action in conjunction with allies. This decision can be seen as the culmination of a decades-long effort by the United States to wean Japan away from its post-WWII pacifist constitution and foreign policy and set it back on the righteous path of being a military power once again, only this time acting in coordination with US foreign policy needs.

In the triumphalism of the end of the Second World War, the American occupation of Japan, in the person of General Douglas MacArthur, played a major role in the creation of this constitution. But after the communists came to power in China in 1949, the United States opted for a strong Japan safely ensconced in the anti-communist camp.

For pacifism, it's been downhill ever since ... step by step ... MacArthur himself ordered the creation of a “national police reserve”, which became the embryo of the future Japanese military ... visiting Tokyo in 1956, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles told Japanese officials: “In the past, Japan had demonstrated her superiority over the Russians and over China. It was time for Ja-

pan to think again of being and acting like a Great Power.” ... various US-Japanese security and defense cooperation treaties, which called on Japan to integrate its military technology with that of the US and NATO ... the US supplying new sophisticated military aircraft and destroyers ... all manner of Japanese logistical assistance to the US in Washington's frequent military operations in Asia ... repeated US pressure on Japan to increase its military budget and the size of its armed forces ... more than a hundred US military bases in Japan, protected by the Japanese military ... US-Japanese joint military exercises and joint research on a missile defense system ... the US Ambassador to Japan, 2001: “I think the reality of circumstances in the world is going to suggest to the Japanese that they reinterpret or redefine Article 9.” ...

Under pressure from Washington, Japan sent several naval vessels to the Indian Ocean to refuel US and British warships as part of the Afghanistan campaign in 2002, then sent non-combat forces to Iraq to assist the American war as well as to East Timor, another made-in-America war scenario ...

US Secretary of State Colin Powell, 2004: “If Japan is going to play a full role on the world stage and become a full active participating member of the Security Council, and have the kind of obligations that it would pick up as a member of the Security Council, Article Nine would have to be examined in that light.” ...

In 2012 Japan was induced to take part in a military exercise with 21 other countries, converging on Hawaii for the largest-ever Rim of the Pacific naval exercises and war games, with a Japanese admiral serving as vice commander of the combined task force.

And so it went ... until, finally, on July 1 of this year, the Abe administration announced their historic decision. Abe, it should be noted, is a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, with which the CIA has had a long and intimate connection, even



when party leaders were convicted World War II war criminals.

If and when the American empire engages in combat with China or Russia, it appears that Washington will be able to count on their Japanese brothers-in-arms. In the meantime, the many US bases in Japan serve as part of the encirclement of China, and during the Vietnam War the United States used their Japanese bases as launching pads to bomb Vietnam.

The US policies and propaganda not only got rid of the annoying Article 9, but along the way it gave rise to a Japanese version of McCarthyism.

A prime example of this is the case of Kimiko Nezu, a 54-year-old Japanese teacher, who was punished by being transferred from school to school, by suspensions, salary cuts, and threats of dismissal because of her refusal to stand during the playing of the national anthem, a World War II song chosen as the anthem in 1999.

She opposed the song because it was the same one sung as the Imperial Army set forth from Japan calling for an “eternal reign” of the emperor. At graduation ceremonies in 2004, 198 teachers refused to stand for the song.

After a series of fines and disciplinary actions, Nezu and nine other teachers were the only protesters the following year. Nezu was then allowed to teach only when another teacher was present.

### **Yankee Blowback**

The number of children attempting to cross the Mexican border into the United States has risen dramatically in the last five years: In fiscal year 2009 (October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010) about 6,000 unaccompanied minors were detained near the border.

The US Department of Homeland Security estimates for the fiscal year 2014 the detention of as many as 74,000 unaccompanied minors. Approximately 28% of the children detained this year are from Honduras, 24% from Guatemala, and 21% from

El Salvador.

The particularly severe increases in Honduran migration are a direct result of the June 28, 2009 military coup that overthrew the democratically-elected president, Manuel Zelaya, after he did things like raising the minimum wage, giving subsidies to small farmers, and instituting free education. The coup – like so many others in Latin America – was led by a graduate of Washington’s infamous School of the Americas.

As per the standard Western Hemisphere script, the Honduran coup was followed by the abusive policies of the new regime, loyally supported by the United States.

The State Department was virtually alone in the Western Hemisphere in not unequivocally condemning the Honduran coup. Indeed, the Obama administration has refused to call it a coup, which, under American law, would tie Washington’s hands as to the amount of support it could give the coup government.

This denial of reality still persists even though a US embassy cable released by Wikileaks in 2010 declared: “There is no doubt that the military, Supreme Court and National Congress conspired on June 28 [2009] in what constituted an illegal and unconstitutional coup against the Executive Branch”. Washington’s support of the far-right Honduran government has been unwavering ever since.

The questions concerning immigration into the United States from south of the border go on year after year, with the same issues argued back and forth: What’s the best way to block the flow into the country? How shall we punish those caught here illegally? Should we separate families, which happens when parents are deported but their American-born children remain? Should the police and various other institutions have the right to ask for proof of legal residence from anyone they suspect of being here illegally? Should we punish employers who hire illegal immigrants? Should we grant amnesty to at least some of the immigrants already

**The State Department was virtually alone in the Western Hemisphere in not unequivocally condemning the Honduran coup**

**The protest in Rome involved around three million people, and is listed in the 2004 Guinness Book of World Records as the largest anti-war rally in history. Madrid hosted the second largest rally with more than 1½ million protesters. About half a million marched in the United States**

here for years? ... on and on, round and round it goes, decade after decade. Those in the US generally opposed to immigration make it a point to declare that the United States does not have any moral obligation to take in these Latino immigrants.

But the counter-argument to this last point is almost never mentioned: Yes, the United States does indeed have a moral obligation because so many of the immigrants are escaping a situation in their homeland made hopeless by American intervention and policy.

In addition to Honduras, Washington overthrew progressive governments which were sincerely committed to fighting poverty in Guatemala and Nicaragua; while in El Salvador the US played a major role in suppressing a movement striving to install such a government.

And in Mexico, though Washington has not intervened militarily since 1919, over the years the US has been providing training, arms, and surveillance technology to Mexico's police and armed forces to better their ability to suppress their own people's aspirations, as in Chiapas, and this has added to the influx of the oppressed to the United States, irony notwithstanding.

Moreover, Washington's North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has brought a flood of cheap, subsidized US agricultural products into Mexico, ravaging campesino communities and driving many Mexican farmers off the land when they couldn't compete with the giant from the north. The subsequent Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) has brought the same joys to the people of that area.

These "free trade" agreements – as they do all over the world – also result in government enterprises being privatized, the regulation of corporations being reduced, and cuts to the social budget.

Add to this the displacement of communities by foreign mining projects and the drastic US-led militarization of the War on Drugs with accompanying violence and you

have the perfect storm of suffering followed by the attempt to escape from suffering.

It's not that all these people prefer to live in the United States. They'd much rather remain with their families and friends, be able to speak their native language at all times, and avoid the hardships imposed on them by American police and other right-wingers.

### **M'lady Hillary**

Madame Clinton, in her new memoir, referring to her 2002 Senate vote supporting military action in Iraq, says: "I thought I had acted in good faith and made the best decision I could with the information I had. And I wasn't alone in getting it wrong. But I still got it wrong. Plain and simple."

In a 2006 TV interview, Clinton said: "Obviously, if we knew then what we know now, there wouldn't have been a vote. And I certainly wouldn't have voted that way."

On October 16, 2002 the US Congress adopted a joint resolution titled "Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq". This was done in the face of numerous protests and other political events against an American invasion.

On February 15, 2003, a month before the actual invasion, there was a coordinated protest around the world in which people in some 60 countries marched in a last desperate attempt to stop the war from happening. It has been described as "the largest protest event in human history."

Estimations of the total number of participants involved reach 30 million. The protest in Rome involved around three million people, and is listed in the 2004 Guinness Book of World Records as the largest anti-war rally in history. Madrid hosted the second largest rally with more than 1½ million protesters. About half a million marched in the United States. How many demonstrations in support of the war can be cited? It can be said that the day was one of humanity's finest moments.

So what did all these people know that Hillary Clinton didn't know? What information did they have access to that she as a member of Congress did not have?

The answer to both questions is of course "Nothing". She voted the way she did because she was, as she remains today, a wholly committed supporter of the Empire and its unending wars.

And what did the actual war teach her? Here she is in 2007, after four years of horrible death, destruction and torture:

"The American military has done its job. Look what they accomplished. They got rid of Saddam Hussein. They gave the Iraqis a chance for free and fair elections. They gave the Iraqi government the chance to begin to demonstrate that it understood its responsibilities to make the hard political decisions necessary to give the people of Iraq a better future. So the American military has succeeded."

And she spoke the above words at a conference of liberals, committed liberal Democrats and others further left. She didn't have to cater to them with any flag-waving pro-

war rhetoric; they wanted to hear anti-war rhetoric (and she of course gave them a tiny bit of that as well out of the other side of her mouth), so we can assume that this is how she really feels, if indeed the woman feels anything.

The audience, it should be noted, booed her, for the second year in a row.

"We came, we saw, he died." – Hillary Clinton as US Secretary of State, giggling, as she referred to the uncivilized and utterly depraved murder of Moammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Imagine Osama bin Laden or some other Islamic leader speaking of September 11, 2001: "We came, we saw, 3,000 died, ha-ha."

**CT**

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*William Blum is the author of "Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II", "Rogue State: a guide to the World's Only Super Power," "West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold War Political Memoir," and "America's Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else"*

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## **BIG MEDIA & INTERNET TITANS**

*Edited by Granville Williams*

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

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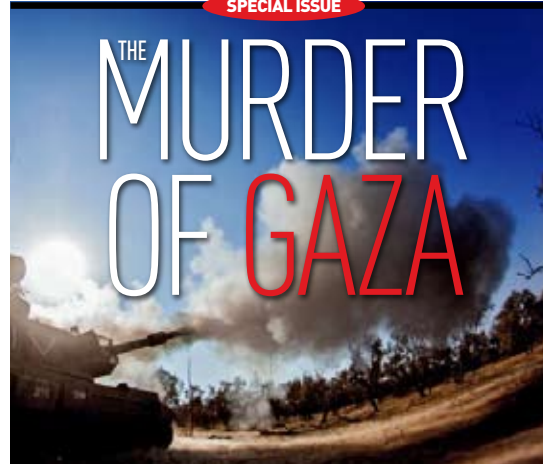
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